

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

Scandal of doctors prevented from saving life in Britain... Because they are refugees

see pages 8 & 9



New victims lined up in 'war on terror'

page 7

Anger with Blair at union conferences

pages 9 & 14

Asad Rehman on the future of the left

page 10

Inside the NHS: echoes of 100 years ago

page 5



Occupation of Iraq continues

US restricts inspectors more than Saddam did

THE US claimed that Iraq's restrictions on United Nations inspectors was the reason it had to go to war. Now it occupies Iraq it has placed more limits on UN-appointed nuclear experts than Saddam Hussein did.

The US has only allowed seven members of the International Atomic Energy Agency into Iraq.

The experts are restricted to one part of the Tuwaitha nuclear facility. Their assessment of the facility must be over in two weeks.

US soldiers will accompany the experts everywhere they go. The experts will not be allowed to investigate reports of radioactive contamination in local towns and villages.

US leaders have made it clear that this visit sets no precedent for a UN presence in Iraq in the future.

UN weapons and nuclear inspectors regularly visited the facility during 1991 to 1998. They also visited it between November last year and March, when Bush forced them out so he could launch a war.

Israel bombed the Tuwaitha facility in 1981. The US and its allies bombed it during the Gulf War of 1991.

The UN is less welcome there than it was during the years of Saddam Hussein's regime because the US wants to dominate Iraq. **More on the US occupation of Iraq—page 7**

The currency question Blair and Brown won't answer...

WHY ARE WE PAID SO LITTLE?

MILLIONS OF words have been written about the euro this week.

But there is one currency question that neither Tony Blair nor Gordon Brown will confront—the scandalous poverty wages that millions of workers in Britain are forced to exist on.

One in five workers in Britain get below £6 an hour. That's just £240 a week for rent or mortgage, bills, childcare and food.

One in three children still live below the breadline—despite all the government's pledges to end child poverty.

Some of the lowest paid workers—many of them women, and many with no tradition of trade union struggle—have had enough.

They are fighting for more pay. But they also want to be treated with respect for the important jobs they do in society.

They are sick of the "profits before

people" business culture, with its bullying managers, that New Labour has injected into our public services.

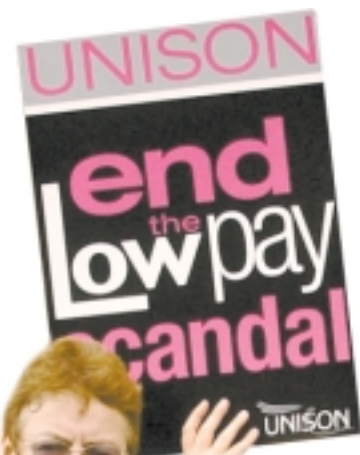
Hundreds of low paid classroom assistants and other non-teaching staff were out on strike for five days across London this week in up to 52 schools and nurseries in London.

They are being joined by low paid workers in libraries, housing and parking departments as part of the fight to win an increase in London weighting—the allowance for the extra costs of living in London.

In Scotland nursery nurses, some of them on only £10,000 a year, are demanding a £4,000 a year increase

● **continued on page 2**

● **Low pay strikes—pages 14 & 15**



Nursery nurses, health workers, council workers speak out

NEWS

●continued from page 1

and to be valued for their vital role in childcare.

They are continuing a series of angry strikes that have involved up to 5,000 workers on the picket lines and demonstrations.

Hundreds of nursery nurses in Tower Hamlets, one of the poorest areas in Britain, are starting an all-out strike from this Friday over pay.

Poorly paid health workers in North Lincolnshire will be picketing outside hospitals in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Goole on Friday as part of their series of strikes against the giant Carillion firm.

And next week workers at Whipps Cross Hospital in east London will escalate their battle against privateers ISS Mediclean—striking for three days starting on Wednesday.

Porter and Unison branch secretary at the hospital Len Hockey told Socialist Worker, “The decision at Whipps Cross reflects a changed mood among workers.

“The days are gone when NHS private contractors could just scare staff by saying, ‘If you don’t like it here get out the door.’

“We feel a new confidence to fight against low pay and the private companies in the NHS.”

This feeling against low pay will be familiar to workers everywhere who face an uphill battle to survive, and the bosses’ endless demands for longer hours, harder work or more flexibility.

Turn to pages 14 and 15 for more on the disputes and where to send messages of support and donations.

Rotten foundations

A REPORT by the government spending watchdog, the Audit Commission, found that the government’s planned elite foundation hospitals may fail, wasting billions of pounds of public money.

It criticised the government’s “star” ratings for hospitals. And it warned that some of the 29 hospitals the government has lined up for foundation status have poor management and risk running up huge debts.

The report also said the government had set too many targets, especially to cut waiting lists, which meant that other areas were neglected.

It said that many trusts had diverted money from medical equipment and vital maintenance work to pay private firms to do extra operations.

Million still wait

DESPITE ALL the government’s targets, the number of people waiting for over a year for a hospital appointment nearly doubled in April.

And the total number of people on the hospital waiting lists is now back to over a million.

The doctors’ BMA organisation has complained that the government has rigged the target for seeing 90 percent of accident and emergency patients within four hours.

The government only met its target for one week when the figures were being monitored.

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They hope we die before we get old

Bosses are getting away with ditching pension schemes, leaving workers in poverty

OVER 500 workers marched on Downing Street last weekend to protest against losing their pensions when their company went into receivership.

The issue they highlighted already affects tens of thousands of workers and could hit millions more.

Under present laws, when a scheme is wound up, people who have already retired receive their pension in full, but those approaching retirement can lose everything they put in.

Bosses usually escape with all their grossly superior pension benefits intact.

The protest was organised by the ASW Sheerness Pensions Group, which has fought for the past year to highlight the injustices workers face when companies

go bust.

ASW, formerly Allied Steel and Wire, went into receivership in July. This resulted in two of its final salary pension schemes being wound up at its plants in Cardiff and Sheerness, Kent.

Sheerness protest group chairman Keith Plowman said he had expected to retire on a pension of two thirds of his final salary.

But because the company has been wound up he is due “around half that and I’m one of the lucky ones. Some people here have lost up to 80 percent of their pensions.”

The ASW action group has identified about 40,000 people whose pensions have been slashed when firms wind up their schemes.

This is normally because firms have gone under—but not necessarily.

Maersk, the shipping giant, closed its Sea-Land pension scheme last year. Workers saw benefits fall by half. Maersk is a profitable company.

The government is proposing to bring in compulsory insurance to protect company pension schemes.

But disgracefully New Labour wants workers to pay the price.

Pensions minister Andrew Smith was expected this week to scrap the rule which raises payments in occupational schemes by 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower.

If this rule goes then pensions can quickly be eroded by inflation—saving bosses billions.

The Amicus union said, “This is a very dangerous move. It is just another sop to the Confederation of British Industry.”

Even the TUC, which has done precious little as companies have destroyed occupational pension schemes, said, “If inflation rose, pensions would be worth less and that would be unacceptable. Unions might have to think about negotiating higher wages.” Yes indeed.

See the ASW action group website www.pensiontheft.org

Action over pensions robbery

JOHN HAYTER is a former ASW worker at Sheerness who paid into the pensions scheme for 30 years. He has a disabled wife.

He said, “Most people think their pensions are secure and separate from their employer, but they’re not.

“I was relying on my pension. Now we’ll have to sell our home and buy

somewhere cheaper. It will be away from the family.

“I’ve always worked hard and followed the advice of the government and pension experts, and paid into the company scheme which everyone said was the safest and best option to provide a retirement income. Nobody told me this could happen.”

Some workers’ fury over

pensions has boiled over into action.

Over 600 workers at the chemical company Rhodia are voting on strikes this week to defend their final salary pension scheme.

The vote at sites in Widnes, Bristol and Oldbury in the West Midlands is over the company’s decision to end access to the final salary

scheme for new workers, and in protest at the company’s management of the scheme for existing staff.

Hundreds of RMT union members at the Wiltshire and Dorset bus company have voted by more than nine to one to strike in defence of their final salary pension scheme.

Pension strikes rock France page 13

IN BRIEF

Drowning at Ford plant

THE FORD car company and two of its managers pleaded guilty last week to safety breaches which had contributed to the death of Christopher Shute, a contract worker, at its Southampton plant.

He drowned in a vat of paint. Managers Peter Preston and Paul McKenzie were due to be sentenced this week.

Pressure on young carers

MORE THAN 13,000 British children under 18 are working more than 50 hours a week to provide care for a sick or disabled relative while trying to keep up full-time attendance at school.

A report from the Children’s Society and the YMCA found that children as young as five are spending longer than the adult maximum working week caring for a relative, often with inadequate support from public services.

Barnet appeal against cuts

HEADTEACHERS in the north London borough of Barnet will join forces to appeal for an emergency cash bail-out from the government because of a “massive shortfall” in funding.

Nick Christou, head of East Barnet School and chairman of the Secondary Heads’ Forum, said his school’s deficit was equal to between eight and 10 full-time teachers.

David Gray, a member of the ruling council of the National Association of Head Teachers, said in his South West England area 50 redundancy notices had been issued to teachers in Plymouth, 28 in Somerset, 48 in Wiltshire and 33 in Bristol.

East Riding council in Yorkshire warned this week that it could lose up to 100 teaching jobs and put some schools on a four-day week.

Oil firm banks on law change

THE HALLIBURTON oil company is notorious for grasping contracts in Iraq. But it is also screwing workers in the US.

Halliburton is delaying the planned bankruptcy of two of its subsidiaries in the cruel hope that a new law will go through that will cut the amount it owes to workers for asbestos-injury claims.

Hard right Republican senator Orrin Hatch is pushing legislation to halt a flood of claims against firms over their use of asbestos.

If he is successful Halliburton’s projected payouts will fall from the \$4 billion it has agreed to pay out to settle 200,000 lawsuits to \$450 million—a 90 percent drop.

Halliburton was once headed by Vice-President Dick Cheney. Asbestos products produced or used by companies that became part of the Halliburton group caused hundreds of thousands of people to develop asbestosis, lung cancer or mesothelioma.

New Labour recently gave Halliburton a £2.3 billion contract to run the IT services for the NHS.

ANTI-NAZI

March against BNP

CAMPAIGNERS against the British National Party (BNP) are building support for marches on 28 June in the areas where 16 BNP councillors have been elected. Those who have signed the statement urging people to join these unity demonstrations include trade union leaders, Labour Party MPs and MEPs, Manchester United

football club and the band Heartless Crew.

Saturday 28 June
Burnley 11am, Crown Court car park
Halifax 1pm, Park Road, next to People’s Park
Broxbourne 1pm, Grundy Park, off Windmill Lane, Cheshunt
Dudley 1pm, Leisure Centre, Wellington Rd. Contact Unity, c/o Anti Nazi League—phone 020 7924 0333.

Stop the War Coalition Activist conference Saturday 21 June

10-5pm, Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London W6

£5 admission fee. Phone 020 7053 2155 • PO Box 3739, London E5 8EJ • www.stopwar.org.uk • office@stopwar.org.uk

Forums include The Project for the New American Century
Palestine
Iraq after the war
Globalisation and war
Civil liberties
What next for the movement

Blair can't hide from his lies about Iraq

THE LIES told by Tony Blair to justify war on Iraq are coming back to haunt him.

This week the conference of Britain's fourth biggest union, the GMB, called for a public inquiry into events leading up to the war. If Blair was found to have lied, said the motion, he should resign.

The conference also supported the Stop the War Coalition and voted to review its links with Labour MPs.

Almost every day there are more problems for Blair.

Home secretary David Blunkett this week admitted, "It would have been better if we hadn't published that dossier."

He was referring to the dossier produced by Blair in January on alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Alistair Campbell, Blair's communications chief, has written to the heads of Britain's intelligence agencies accepting that the dossier "had not met the required standards of accuracy".

That's putting it mildly. The dossier was cut and pasted from a 12 year old student thesis.

Nuclear nonsense

Blair pumped out still more lies this week, continuing to claim that Iraq tried to buy uranium from the African state of Niger.

The documents this claim was based on have been declared crude forgeries by International Atomic Energy Authority inspectors.

Blair says he has "a number of sources" for the claim apart from the forgeries. The inspectors deny any other source exists. Who do you believe?

Pentagon admission

In the US too it emerged last week that a report by the Pentagon intelligence agency concluded last year there was "no reliable evidence" that Saddam Hussein

had chemical weapons.

At least we brought freedom to Iraq, argues Blair.

Yet the reality of what is happening today in Iraq is grim, and getting worse as the occupying forces lord it over people. No wonder there is resistance.

The next steps

The millions who marched against the war were right. They said the dossiers produced to justify war were lies and that the war would not bring liberation.

We cannot rely on Labour MPs, most of who have been completely spineless, to bring Blair to account.

Next Saturday the Stop the War Coalition is holding a vital conference in London (details on opposite page).

Every anti-war activist should try to be there to discuss how we make Blair pay the price for his lies and how we prevent yet more horror.

Reports on union conferences
pages 9 and 14

OVER 1,000 ON STRIKE AT SOUTH YORKS BUSES



Sheffield bus strikers on the picket line last weekend. Full story page 15

What the euro statement really means

GORDON Brown "yesterday set the government on course for another nine months of wrangling over the euro".

That was the verdict of the Financial Times business paper on the government's euro announcement.

It is bang on. All the 1.5 million words and fancy language in Brown's "assessment" are flannel to hide the reality that the government, and Britain's bosses, are split to the core over the issue.

New Labour's leading figures are deeply divided.

Brown's statement recalls the way Tory

prime minister John Major sought to paper over the cracks in his government over Europe in the early 1990s.

Just as with that Tory government, the issue will continue to erupt in bitter rows tearing at the heart of New Labour.

But there's one thing all sides are agreed on. In or out of the euro, workers will suffer in a drive for what Brown calls "greater flexibility".

"As part of radical reforms at a national, regional and local level, I propose that by next year almost all pay remits for public sector bodies will



Brown wants regional pay

include a regional or local pay dimension," said Brown.

This means an assault on national pay and conditions agreements for millions of workers. It is a signal to national private sector employers

to follow suit.

The union leaders should stop meekly gazing at what is happening around them and state clearly that they will call action to defeat the regional pay plans.

Another thing is clear from the euro fudge too.

Taking Britain into the euro has been a central plank for Blair and his apostles at the heart of the New Labour "project". The divisions and this week's fudge

leave that "project" looking weaker than ever.

If there were a referendum on the euro now Socialist Worker

would urge a no vote.

The whole plan is based on slashing public spending and driving through attacks on wages and welfare.

That does not mean giving an inch to the Little Englanders of the "keep the pound" brigade.

They also want to drive through attacks on us and wrap themselves in right wing nationalist rhetoric.

We need an independent, left wing politics, one which says no to the bosses' plans and solidarity with workers across borders.

Imperialism today: is the US unstoppable? **What would socialism be like?** Does the movement need political parties? **How do ideas change?** Is Labour just another Tory party? **Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?** Is racism getting worse? **What makes you working class?** What sort of cities do we want? **What is historical materialism?** Is Chavez the new hope for Latin America? **Can Palestine be free?**

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timetable
out
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The road map to oppression?

THERE HAS been much optimistic comment on the meeting last week in Aqaba, Jordan, between US president George W Bush, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Authority representative Abu Mazen.

The fact that Bush seems to be putting his shoulder to the wheel and making a serious effort to implement the o-called road map, intended to revive the Middle East eace process, has surprised many people.

The Guardian devoted its ront page to the naive deter-ination with which he ap- roached the Aqaba meeting.

The surprise is a result of wo perceptions, one largely ccurate, and the other partial nd distorted.

It is true that there are ery close links between the eo-conservative ideologues urrently so influential in ashington and Sharon's ight wing Likud party in srael.

One of the sources of the ush Doctrine of preventive ar seems to have been a ocument drafted in 1996 or Binyamin Netanyahu, ho was then taking over as ikud prime minister of srael.

Those involved in draft- ing the document include ichard Perle, now a senior entagon adviser, and Dou- las Feith, currently Donald umsfeld's number three.

More misleading is the idespread belief that links f this kind, not to speak of he power of the "Jewish obby" in US politics, mean hat the United States is ound hand and foot to srael.

The truth is that Israel is mply one of Washington's ey allies in the Middle ast.

From the US point of ew, it is both an advantage nd a disadvantage to have srael permanently at war ith the Arab world.

It's an advantage because t means Israel ultimately has owhere else to go but the merican alliance.

It's a disadvantage be- cause the conflict between srael and the Palestinians ermanently threatens to get ut of hand and destabilise he entire region.

That danger has become eality since the second in- ifada started in September 000.

Claim

9/11 made it easier for haron to get a very right ing Republican administra- ion to see things his way, ut this doesn't mean that S and Israeli interests are dential.

In the past few weeks it as been Sharon who has een shifting.

He forced the road map hrough the Israeli cabinet, sed the word "occupation" o refer to the plight of the alestinians—something that s anathema to extreme Zion- sts who lay claim to the hole of Palestine.

He also said that some of he illegal Jewish settlements n the Occupied Territories ill have to go as part of a inal settlement.

These moves must reflect ressure on Sharon from the ush administration. This ouldn't come as too much f a surprise.

In the early 1990s Bush's ather withheld \$10 billion orth of loan guarantees rom Israel to push the gov- rnment of Yitzhak Shamir

ALEX CALLINICOS analyses what the "peace deal" offered to the Palestinians will actually mean

into negotiations with the Palestinians.

But these moves, while important, don't mean that justice for the Palestinians is a prospect.

For one thing, the Bush administration—true to the spirit of democracy it is showing in Iraq—insists on deciding who counts as a "le- gitimate" Palestinian leader.

Yasser Arafat, despite the fact he is the elected Palestin- ian president, has been a non- person ever since Bush denounced him a year ago.

Washington was furious when Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign minister, visited Arafat recently.

Abu Mazen was hand- picked as the Palestinian prime minister by the Bush administration because the US and Israel believe he can be relied on to crush Palestinian militants—one of the main aims of the "peace process" from the start.

Right

Sharon is demanding that Abu Mazen recognise Israel as a Jewish state.

This is because the Israeli government is desperate to ensure that any final settle- ment denies the Palestinian refugees scattered around the Middle East the right to return to Israel—a right, of course, that Israel confers on every Jew in the world.

Bush last week promised that the Palestinian state which eventually emerges will have contiguous territory.

He kept stumbling over the word "contiguous", but what he meant was that the state won't be divided up, as the Occupied Territories currently are, into separate patches of land where access is controlled by the Israeli Defence Force.

We'll see. Sharon may be prepared to scrap some of the Jewish settlements in the Territories, but it is incon- ceivable that he will give them all up.

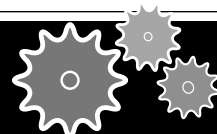
And he is busily building a "security fence" along the western side of the West Bank and East Jerusalem that amounts to a covert means of annexing yet more Palestinian land.

Under American pressure, Sharon may concede a little more land and dignity to the Palestinians than he would offer if left to himself.

The fact remains that this road ends in a Palestinian Bantustan—the fake home- lands offered to black South Africans under apartheid.

And these will be towered over by a US-armed Israeli colossus.

inside the system



IN THE FRAME



No. 14
BERNARD KERIK

NEW YORK'S ex police chief has been appointed to bring law and order to Iraq. When asked about the US failure to find weapons of mass destruction, Kerik said, "I don't care." He says he wants to "show the Iraqi people why the US is so great". Kerik is also on the board of Taser International, which produces "non-lethal" weapons for law enforcement.

Bush and Blair vetoed peace

TONY BLAIR says the threat of an "unreasonable" French veto on the UN Security Council forced him to abandon efforts to get a second resolution backing the war.

This is a lie. Britain and the US dropped their plans because they knew they would lose.

An investigation by the Financial Times has discovered that all six of the "undecided" states on the Security Council planned to vote against a second resolution.

The US and Britain needed backing from five to secure a majority.

Met's home movie sale

LONDON'S MET police force is doing a nice little sideline.

The Met turned up at a big TV industry conference this year flogging off 3,000 hours of footage shot by police cameras in London.

The Met's sales team offered film from CCTV surveillance units, and roadside cameras to TV production companies.

They also offered to hire out police uniforms, buildings, vehicles and even police officers for use in TV programmes.

* **Thanks to Steve Lax for this story.**

The Iraq visit that wasn't

THE MEDIA trumpeted Blair's recent visit to Iraq's second city, Basra.

In fact, he only got as far as the outskirts as officials feared protests.

The school he visited was reconstructed specially for the day.

He spent most of his time holed up in one of Saddam Hussein's heavily fortified palaces.

All we are saying is give oil a chance

"GIVE OIL a chance," sang Exxon Mobil shareholders during a meeting in Dallas.

Some oil companies, like BP and Shell, have tried to give themselves a "green" makeover in recent years, pretending they care about the environment.

But there was no such window-dressing for the biggest oil company of them all, Exxon Mobil.

The shareholders loudly demanded their right to pollute the world, bursting into song to drown out environmental protesters.

The shareholders then threw out resolutions about reducing global warming and promoting renewable energy.

"We won't jump on the



Oily: Lee Raymond

bandwagon just because others may have a different view," said Exxon Mobil's chief executive, Lee Raymond.

"We don't invest to make social statements at the expense

of shareholder return."

An Indonesian activist shareholder, Radhi Darman- syah, addressed the conference, saying, "You are killing my brothers and sisters."

Top boss Raymond had his microphone switched off and contemptuously told him to "come back another time".

Raymond keeps a low profile—appearing in public only to attack any attempt to limit global warming.

He is unapologetic about doing business with some of the most repressive regimes in the world. And he refuses to add gays to the company's equal opportunities legislation.

* **Thanks to A Bhattacharyya for this story.**



No mercy for army widow

THE WIDOW of a soldier based at the Deepcut army barracks in Surrey is being deported.

The Home Office has told Deveen Clarke that she must leave Britain by September after she lost her appeal against deportation.

The Deepcut army barracks is where four young soldiers have been found dead in suspicious circumstances

over the last two years.

Deveen's husband, Mario, who served at the barracks, was shot outside his home in Hackney in east London.

Despite all the talk of "our boys" during the war against Iraq, the Home Office has shown no compassion to the grieving widow of a serving British soldier.

It has refused her appeal to stay on compassionate

grounds, saying she does not have a "marriage visa".

She will be able to stay until a headstone is erected on her husband's grave, then she will be sent back to Jamaica.

"I have to go back immediately afterwards," said Deveen.

"I'll never be able to see it again and the thought of that devastates me."

FIGURE IT OUT

54

That is how few asylum seekers there are in Burnley. If you believed the scaremongering of the Nazis and the right wing press you might think the figure was ten or 100 times the real one.

"FIND A good TV backdrop."

That's what the Department of Health told bosses at UCLH hospital in central London when health secretary Alan Milburn decided to pay a call.

UCLH is being rebuilt under the Private Finance Initiative.

Milburn wanted to be pictured next to some expensive equipment bought with government money.

Trust bosses tore through the hospital tearing down newspaper cartoons that joked about the government's disastrous PFI schemes.

The entrance bosses thought Milburn would use

was freshly painted.

But at the last minute the venue switched because the scanner he planned to pose with had been paid for by the voluntary sector.

Milburn opted for another site at the hospital to be pictured near a government-funded scanning machine.

Managers rushed around, spending hundreds of pounds hastily repainting doors.

But they failed to inform doctors of the visit.

Seriously ill cancer patients were forced to miss urgent scans while Milburn was interviewed for television and pictured next to the scanner for two hours.



WHO SAYS?

"We're here to kick ass. Let them think the Marines are prepared to top 'em all if they step out of line."
LIEUTENANT COLONEL ERIK GROWBSKY serving with the US Marines in Iraq

"I don't often feel like I've been taken for a sucker. How could I have been so naive?"
MICHAEL PORTILLO former Tory leadership contender on how he feels betrayed by Blair over the war

"My god, if this is the best intelligence they have and we find nothing, what about the rest?"
HANS BLIX chief UN weapons inspector on his thoughts when British and US intelligence tip-offs proved useless

"I would not put it past the Americans to plant their own weapons of mass destruction in Iraq."
DENIS HEALEY former deputy leader of the Labour Party

"I think capitalism has got everybody's goat."
WALTER BECKER Steely Dan band on their new album Everything Must Go

"We will apply all necessary combat power to ensure that opposition is removed."
LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID MCKIERNAN US command in Iraq

"There is a danger of being sucked into a quagmire."
BRITISH MILITARY COMMANDER in Iraq



Do you have a story for inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

The reality of working life in Britain

'What has changed in the last 100 years?'

STOKE POTTERIES CLOSURES



Workers at Wedgwood's Alexandra factory after hearing that their jobs will be axed

Picture: The Sentinel, Stoke

'We're reeling from this kick in teeth'

"WE ARE just reeling. We didn't expect that. It was a real kick in the teeth. Nobody could work afterwards. Everyone was dumbstruck."

That is how Norman Baddely reacted to the huge blow that has hit the Staffordshire city of Stoke-on-Trent.

Norman works at the Eagle pottery factory in the town, as do his wife and son.

On Wednesday of last week the firm's bosses, Waterford Wedgwood, announced it was closing the Eagle and Alexandra factories, throwing 1,058 people out of work.

The Stoke area is still known as "the Potteries" because of the long history of pottery firms dominating local employment.

Over the last decade waves of redundancies and closures have devastated the area, leaving the name virtually meaningless.

Paul Kelly, whose wife works for Waterford Wedgwood, told Socialist Worker, "Some workers heard the news on the radio before

they were told at the factory.

"They don't know what they're going to do now. It's all going to be warehouses round here."

This is the third swathe of redundancies Waterford Wedgwood has forced through in recent years. It sacked 1,400 workers in 2001 and others in 1998.

Developers were already making bids to take over the factories at the end of last week. Bosses want to move production to China.

Waterford Wedgwood will continue to employ 2,400 people at

the Barlaston factory in Stoke but many workers feel under threat.

"People feel cheated," said Adrian Ashman, who works at the Barlaston factory. "We were told the work would stay in the UK."

"This is a big loss. Everything's been run down. All of the potteries will be gone soon. Waterford Wedgwood said the Barlaston factory is safe for now, but I think it will be gone in ten years."

"There's nothing left round Stoke-on-Trent," said a woman who also works at Barlaston.

"The pits have gone. Royal Doulton's closed last Christmas. Whole families work at the Eagle and Alexandra factories so it's not just one person who's going to lose their job or house."

"The big redundancies in the Potteries started around ten years ago," says Stewart Crehan from Stoke. "Since then it's been constant. There's always something in the news about closures."

"The closure of Eagle and Alexandra is unprecedented. People

feel that Stoke is going to turn into a ghost town. All the new jobs seem to be in call centres.

"This is going to affect people who've spent ten, 20, 30 years working for Waterford Wedgwood. How are men in their 50s going to be retrained?"

The company claims it has to throw people on the dole because the business is "unsustainable".

But it made £5.2 million profits last year. The man with the most shares in the company is Sir Tony O'Reilly. He is also chairman of the Independent News and Media group and has a personal fortune of £1.3 billion.

Disgracefully the government has said nothing about the job losses.

Hundreds of people signed a petition against the closures in Stoke town centre on Saturday. As areas like Stoke are devastated, trade unions need to start leading a fight.

That would also help to marginalise the Nazi BNP, which won a council seat in Stoke in May.

Almost 100 years ago the socialist author Robert Tressell wrote a novel, *The Ragged Trouserer Philanthropists*, which powerfully described the exploitation of workers.

Healthcare assistant Phil Reilly compares his own experience today working in a hospital on the Wirral in Merseyside.

THE YEAR is 2003. I work in the NHS and I find myself relating more each day with the character Frank Owen (the house painter) from *The Ragged Trouserer Philanthropists*.

Can anyone explain to me why I work in a hospital with a three-star rating, yet seriously ill patients or, as the hospital prefers to call them, "clients" are expected to be happy with lying in soiled linen?

The hospital has to wait for the clean linen to be delivered and distributed amongst the wards, as linen washed by an outside private firm out of the local area is a cheaper option.

Can anyone explain why it's acceptable for "clients" or, as I prefer to call them, "patients" to be left half-naked while staff wait for clean nightwear to be delivered to the wards along with the clean linen?

Please tell me I'm overreacting, but I was frustrated and angry to find myself in a situation last year that I found most upsetting.

Seriously ill people are mostly rushed into hospital and do not usually have the opportunity to pack toiletries.

It's the hospital's responsibility to provide adequate soap, wipes and towels so they can wash whilst they have their own toiletries brought in. Of course not everyone can afford these luxuries (homeless or poor).

Sadly this is not always the case, as I found last September. After being rushed into hospital and not having their own toiletries, a patient needed to be bed-bathed, especially as the patient was incontinent.

I found that not only were there no wipes to wash with, but there were no gloves either.

I decided to do the almost daily routine of walking from ward to ward to find the essentials, only to find that the other wards were in the same situation.

Wards were reduced to washing patients with wipes that were normally used for walls and

floors. One ward was even using incontinence knickers for wipes.

This was in the same month the hospital was rewarded with three stars. How was this possible?

I consider the management of this hospital (Wirral Hospital Trust) to be extremely superficial.

A new revolving door on the main entrance (costing over £1 million) and beds with phones, TVs and internet access are seen as important moves within the hospital, but simple gloves, wipes and linen are not.

Talk about sell the sizzle, not the sausage!

If the living conditions of the patients isn't bad enough, then the poor staff surely need your pity.

Since the trust contracts came into force in the early 1990s, staff have been expected to work alongside one another on different pay scales, and expected to work nights and weekends for no extra pay.

In fact, we have only just started to receive bank holiday money.

For example I recently worked:

Saturday night: 21.00 - 07.45

Sunday night: 21.00 - 07.45

Monday late: 16.00 - 21.30

(I was meant to come to work at 14.30, but I took it upon myself to wait until four o'clock.)

Tuesday early: 07.30 - 15.30

Wednesday early: 07.30 - 15.30

Thursday early: 07.30 - 15.30

I had no extra pay, nor did I receive much sleep. So much for the caring profession!

Back to Frank Owen. I'm scared and frustrated by colleagues' lack of concern for these problems raised and have in fact started to see them as the norm.

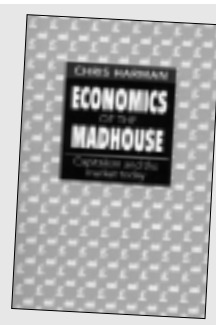
I have actually heard people saying such pathetic excuses as "It's not for the likes of us."

Who are they to be so much better than us?

I'm truly sorry for my lengthy ramble, but I just needed to let off steam to someone that cares!

Economics of the Madhouse

by Chris Harman
£3.50 from Bookmarks—
phone 020 7637 1848 or go
to www.bookmarks.uk.com



Letters@socialistworker.co.uk

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Healthy food costs more

Smoking, diet: should we change lives or lifestyles?

I WAS shocked but sadly not surprised to hear of New Labour's plans to make people who smoke, are overweight or who don't take regular exercise sign agreements with their GP.

Any breach of these agreements could potentially jeopardise access to NHS treatment.

New Labour would like us to believe that these are simply lifestyle choices, and therefore the consequences for health should be the sole responsibility of the individual.

The wealthy consult their dieticians, lifestyle gurus and personal trainers on their

wellbeing—and then pass judgement and punishment on the rest of us. In contrast the majority of people in this country have very little choice at all.

Good quality fresh food is not cheap. I have a friend on income support and she has £30 a week to spend on food for herself and her two kids. She doesn't simply choose to buy cheap junk foods. She has no choice.

We are also constantly bombarded with advertisements for junk foods—a despicably large number purposely aimed at children—many of which claim to be healthy options.

We have no control over this as individuals. The government does. But I don't see New Labour demanding that big food corporations sign agreements not to push junk products or to stop making huge profits from the sale of food.

Nor do I see the government genuinely tackling the causes of smoking or refusing to benefit from the huge sums of money it collects from tobacco taxation.

And as for exercise, New Labour have continued to drive enjoyable physical activities from school life, to close down playgrounds, playschemes and youth centres which kept young people active and

off the sofas.

They provide no free health and exercise centres. Presuming you have any energy left after working increasingly longer hours and if you've got the money you can choose to attend a health centre. If you haven't then that choice just doesn't exist.

We can blame the individual but that just lets the government and policy makers off the hook. If we want a healthier society we need to change the reality of the lives of working class people, not their "lifestyles".

Molly Mahamdallie
North London

YOUR VIEW ●●●

Our DU demo brings result

JUST TO let you know we held a small demo outside our local army careers office.

We were highlighting in particular the issue of depleted uranium and its use in past wars, and also the depleted uranium shells tested at Dundernann on the Solway Firth.

The army closed the office and pulled down the shutters. Result!

The public were also very interested in our campaign.

Barry Donnan
Irvine

Respect key to 'crap' jobs

IN RESPONSE to Nidhall Eddeym (Letters, 7 June), who asked who would do the crap jobs in a socialist society, the answer is simple—anyone who is unemployed.

It's better than dole money and they will get treated with the same respect as everyone else.

The trouble comes when you pay them less and they are treated less favourably and looked down on.

I have done lots of crap jobs, and you feel crap because you are treated like crap.

I don't think anyone would mind doing so called "crap" jobs if they were treated with respect.

R Tyler
London

Think what this cash could do

I READ recently in the Daily Express about a fat cat boss getting pay such as £35 million, and three insurance bosses getting £170 million between them.

I was totally appalled.

They think they are worth it, but I know it is legalised robbery.

Just think what a socialist policy could do with the amount they are receiving.

C A Douthwaite
Barrow-in-Furness

Where are the factories too?

TONY BLAIR not only told parliament of chemical weapons, but of factories actively producing them across Iraq.

He said in the House of Commons on 24

September last year, "The dossier shows that Iraq continues to produce chemical agents for chemical weapons, and has rebuilt previously destroyed production plants across Iraq."

Please could someone ask why these factories cannot be found?

David Roberts
by e-mail

Iraq and the media war

THE ROW over the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is the lead story by

"intelligence" author Stephen Dorril in a special issue of Free Press—Iraq and the Media War.

The booklet is published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom.

Other articles include an analysis of "embedding" by David Miller of the Stirling Media Research Institute.

Anyone wanting copies of the booklet can obtain them from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, 23 Orford Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9JU. Phone 07774 607 419.

Barry White
London

Italian? You can vote in referendum

ON 15 June all Italian citizens will be called to vote in two referendums.

One is for social control of harmful electromagnetic emissions from the national grid.

The other asks for the extension of Article 18 to employers with fewer than 15 employees and is particularly important.

At the moment only 6 percent of Italian employers, those with more than 15 employees, are bound to apply Article 18—giving the right to be reinstated in the job previously held should a judge rule a dismissal unfair.

A yes victory in this referendum will be a blow to the neo-liberal trend towards uncertainty in the workplace, and the Berlusconi government. A yes victory concerns the dignity, job

security and freedom for all workers. A right is either universal or it does not exist.

For the first time Italians living abroad and belonging to the AIRE lists will be able to vote by postal vote in this referendum.

Rifondazione Comunista invites everyone to vote yes. And we ask political bodies, unions and social groups in Britain to publicise as far as possible in their mailing lists and newspapers this appeal.

A victory on the extension of workers' rights in Italy will be a victory for all European workers. United we can win.

Anyone wanting more information on the yes campaign please e-mail dirittipertutti@yahoo.it or phone 07946 561 926.

Enrico Mandelstan
Partito della Rifondazione Comunista UK branch

Protest tonic after Evian

WE SPENT a few days in Evian before it was closed to all but residents for the G8 summit.

There was little good feeling among locals as their beautiful town became an ugly militarised zone. Hundreds of heavily armed soldiers were everywhere. A monstrous camouflaged missile launcher pad marred the lake.

Moving into Geneva we experienced the anti-capitalist movement armed not with bombs and guns, but with visionary ideas and an enthusiasm to put them into action.

This was truly inspirational. Hundreds of protesters visited the Globalise Resistance and Stop the War stalls we

helped set up, and many were impressed with the broad-based groups we had been part of in Britain.

As first time protesters on an international event such as this we would like to thank all of the Globalise Resistance and Swiss ATTAC organisers for their support and leadership, encouragement and patience, which were highly impressive.

We will be taking back our exciting experience to Leeds, and will be returning to Paris in November for the European Social Forum and will make sure that from Leeds our numbers will be more.

Sally, Paula, Rosa
and Steve
Leeds

Just a cover

IN YOUR article on the euro, "What's Behind This Row?" (Socialist Worker, 31 May), you missed the obvious point.

The row is a put-up job to keep the plebs arguing while their pensions and health services are stolen away.

The cancer of privatisation has been spreading across the European Union, but nothing like it has in Britain. The strong opposition put up by continental trade union movements, of which we have just had a shining example from the French, has limited or even blocked it.

European Union countries are in fact further apart than they were 40 years ago, with Britain now at the bottom of the league. The same applies to the comparative levels of public investment.

Hugh Lowe
West London

obituary

Linda Morgan

MANY PEOPLE will be deeply saddened to hear of the death of Linda Morgan last week after a short illness.

Linda became a political activist in the mid-1970s following her involvement in the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. She became a key figure in the rank and file organisation and was elected to her union's executive on a socialist platform.

Having joined St Albans SWP in 1977 she became a leading figure in many local and national campaigns.

It was in the Great Miners' Strike of 1984-5 that Linda's greatest gifts came to the fore. Her humanity, anger against the Tories and political judgement won her huge respect, especially from miners and their families. She had a corrosive ability to

dispel sectarianism.

Wearied by the Thatcher years, Linda took time out to travel. However, it was no surprise to find that Linda found a new home in the global anti-war movement. The tenacity and wisdom she brought to our stop the war group was fundamental to its success.

Linda was an outstanding fighter who blended clarity and warmth with a formidable intellect.

We will miss her greatly. Our thoughts are with her partner Steve and her daughters Jo and Sarah.

Linda's funeral and a celebration of her life will take place at West Herts Crematorium (Garston, Watford) at 3.20pm on Thursday 12 June. Everybody is very welcome. Jane Hardy

‘War on terror’ sees new victims lined up

Iran and North Korea could be next on the US hit list argues Kevin Ovenden, even while the chaos goes on in Afghanistan and Iraq

THE neo-conservative warmon- gers in the White House have taken critical steps towards attacking more countries even as occupation brings further suffering to the peo- ples of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The two states next on George Bush’s “axis of evil” list are Iran and North Korea.

The most hawkish members of the Bush gang are turning to the same lies and propaganda they used before the invasion of Iraq to now prepare for possible war against these two countries.

And on the same day last week the neo-conservatives moved to make war more likely.

US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced on Tuesday a redeployment of US troops in South Korea to allow an attack on North Korea with fewer US casualties.

His boss, Donald Rumsfeld, threatened Iran with “serious” con- sequences, claiming it was trying to develop nuclear weapons.

There has been a marked in- crease in US threats against Iran recently.

Tony Blair added to these on his visit to Iraq when he directly warned Iran against “interference” in Iraq.

Occupation

The US-led administration in Iraq has again signalled what its occu- pation is all about.

Its senior adviser to Iraq’s min- istry of industry and minerals an- nounced that dozens of Iraqi state-owned companies are to be privatised within a year.

The administration had previ- ously said it would wait until the creation of an elected Iraqi gov- ernment before beginning the sell-off.

But Paul Bremer, the imposed governor of Iraq, last month can- celled a national conference of Iraqi political parties and groups which was supposed to pave the way towards elections.

There is to be no delay in “steer- ing a clear course” towards a free market economy, as Bremer puts it.

The Iraqi ministry controls 48 state companies. Foreign business- men from the Gulf states and mainly US multinationals are

lining up to take them over.

The arrogance of the occupiers, combined with daily suffering, has fuelled rising resistance from ordi- nary people across Iraq.

People in the city of Fallujah, in central Iraq, last week demolished a police station in protest at the oc- cupation. It was attacked the day before by a rocket-propelled gren- ade, killing one US soldier.

The US military was aiming to establish a base of operations there. It is pouring 1,500 extra troops into Fallujah to crush the local population.

Iraqis protest

Townspeople have repeatedly at- tacked US forces since troops opened fire on a protest one week into the occupation, killing 18 un- armed Iraqis.

Standing in the rubble of the station Arkan Habib told journal- ists, “The rocket-propelled gren- ade attack was a warning to the Americans.

“We have told them more than once that this is a residential area and we don’t want them here.”

Unemployed Mezher Al Jumeili said, “We are not loyal to Saddam. He was a dictator and a tyrant.

“Now he has gone, but the Americans are acting like dictators themselves.”

Attacks on occupation forces are increasing in small towns and cities, including Baghdad. The US mili- tary is suffering a higher rate of cas- ualties than it did during the war.

The occupation forces have been unable to establish law and order, but instead are turning their fire on political opposition.

In Fallujah the majority are Sunni Muslims. US troops targeted a key force among Shia Muslims when they raided the Baghdad office of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq at the weekend.

Two days earlier US forces seized 20 members of the group in the town of Baquba.

Bremer had promised the group would be part of a coalition government.

The US military has now ad- mitted it will have to leave larger numbers of troops than expected in Iraq.

US troops patrol in Fallujah where Iraqis demolished a police station in protest at the occupation

Picture: Getty images/Mario Tama

Ready for ‘pre-emptive’ strike?

THE strategic redeployment of US troops is part of the necessary preparations if the US chooses to go to war again. It has caused near panic in South Korea and nearby Japan.

The US has stationed troops on the border separating North and South Korea for 50 years, since the end of the Korean War.

It is now pulling them back to bases deeper into South Korea. That will leave them out of range of North Korea’s army should the US decide to launch a war.

However, the South Korean capital, Seoul, will not be out of range. It is just 37 miles from the border and within the sights of huge North Korean artillery.

North Korea’s main strategic deterrence over the last 50 years has been to threaten to turn Seoul “into a sea of fire” should the US and South Korean forces attack.

US undersecretary of state John Bolton repeated calls for the use of “pre-emptive military force” last week against North Korea and other states.

Wolfowitz added that it would not be enough for North Korea simply to abandon its nuclear programme for the US to lift its economic blockade and threats to attack. It would have to change “in other ways as well”.

Bolton widened the target list, saying, “The logic of adverse consequences must fall not only on the states aspiring to possess weapons of mass destruction, but on the states

‘It’s about protecting US power across the globe’

supplying them as well.”

He and the neo-conservatives have accused Russia and China of supplying the means to make such weapons to Iran, Libya, North Korea and other states.

Part of the thinking behind the troop redeployments is to put pressure on China and Russia as well as to police what one US official calls “an arc of instability” from the Balkans through the Middle East and Central Asia across to the Korean peninsula.

Some 80,000 US troops are to move from Germany to bases further east in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania— Washington’s little Warsaw Pact on Russia’s doorstep.

US forces are moving out of Saudi Arabia, also a target for the neo-conservatives, into new bases in the Gulf state of Qatar and in Iraq, a ground assault away from the heart of Iran.

The US presence is quietly

increasing in Central Asia— bordering Russia and China.

Thailand has volunteered to take thousands of US troops from bases in Japan, which would put them back in South East Asia in large numbers for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War.

The excuse for all these aggressive moves is the “war on terror”. But they are part of a strategy which long predates 11 September 2001 and was laid out in neo-conservative think- tanks such as the Project for the New American Century.

It is about projecting US power across the globe and facing down any potential military and economic competitors.

But it also means the US state putting itself face to face with the immense feeling of hundreds of millions of people across the globe against imperialism and rule by the multinationals.

AFGHANISTAN

Karzai begs for troops and cash

BRITISH generals leaked to the media at the weekend that they feared getting bogged down in a “quagmire” in Iraq.

Eighteen months after the fall of the Taliban, that is precisely what has happened in Afghanistan.

A bomb attack killed four German soldiers in the capital, Kabul, at the weekend.

Afghanistan’s president, Hamid Karzai, was in London receiving

an honorary knighthood from the queen and begging Tony Blair for more troops and cash.

Karzai has been dubbed the mayor of Kabul as his rule does not touch the rest of the country, which is under the control of rival warlords.

One of them,

Gulbuddin Hekamtayar, is suspected of the attack at the weekend. He was once the Afghan warlord most favoured by the US.

He has now allied himself with regrouped Taliban elements who fought a serious battle with forces loyal to Karzai last week,

resulting in the deaths of 49 people.

US troops have pulled back from most of the posts they had occupied on the Pakistan/ Afghanistan border.

The Kabul bomb attack shows the hold of Karzai and the Western forces sent to shore him up is weakening.



Hamid Karzai and Bush

My first month on Preston council

We're fighting on every issue

Michael Lavalette won a council seat for the Socialist Alliance in Preston in the local elections in May. Here he describes his first month in the council chamber



THE ELECTION result was a shock, but a tremendous success for the Socialist Alliance.

In the last month I have received messages of support and congratulations from all over the country.

This breakthrough was a welcome boost to socialists everywhere.

The success of the Socialist Alliance in Preston has meant that we are now taken seriously as a political force in the city.

It also means that a whole layer of labour movement activists are looking at what we are doing and considering their position.

At the Socialist Alliance meeting after the election we recruited seven new members—one of them a regional full-time official with the Communication Workers Union.

The meeting was fantastic. Everyone in the room spoke, and everybody was bubbling with ideas about what we should do next. Nobody was afraid to disagree. There was real debate.

It is now vital we do not let people down. We can't rest on our laurels.

The Socialist Alliance is not like all the other parties who disappear into the council chamber for the years between elections.

Similarly we are not interested in the political wheeling and dealing between the major parties that shapes council business.

We want to be open, inclusive, accountable and democratic.

We want to be approachable so that people can bring their problems to us.

That means dealing with people's queries about their housing, or various aspects of their environment.

In a sense we are trying to be like a kind of "community shop steward".

Our first regular local newsletter thanked people for voting for us, passed on our contact details and advertised a Stop the War meeting with George Galloway.

We have also arranged a number of surgeries in the ward. Local councillors in Preston don't usually do this.

We have now set up two surgeries where people can come and meet us.

We are going to hold them regularly each month. They will take place in a local community centre and the mosque.

But if this was all we did then we would be no different to other councillors who reflect local issues. We need to do more than this.

At present there are two vital issues—the SATs tests and foundation hospitals.

Preston City Council does not have responsibility for either education or health.

But as working class representatives we want to expose New Labour's attacks

HERE ARE many hundreds of people who could help solve the chronic staff shortages and long waiting lists in the NHS. They are not being used because the press and politicians treat them with hatred and suspicion.

They are refugee doctors.

The waste of doctors' talent, skills and energy is just one example of how the skills and willingness to work of all refugees is thrown away by government policy.

Last week the British Medical Association and the Refugee Council organised a conference, "Supporting Refugee Doctors to Practise in the UK".

The BMA knows of 965 doctors who are refugees or asylum seekers in Britain.

"These are just the ones who volunteered to register on the database," said Deng Yai from the Refugee Council.

"There are about 1,000 others or even more out there. The number of refugee doctors is estimated at 2,000."

They are highly trained in areas such as child surgery, general practice and gynaecology.

The top three countries they have fled from are Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran.

Many live in London. The second biggest group—some 21 percent—are in the north west of England and Yorkshire.

One West Midlands delegate at the conference commented, "The refugees' skills match where we have got a shortfall. For instance, we've got shortages of anaesthetists and there are 24 of them on the database."

Deng Yai added, "When you look at the specialisation of these doctors, and then at the people queuing up to see a GP or a consultant, it is such a pity.

"They are an untapped resource that is not taken full advantage of. They would make a difference to so many people's lives."

Dr Edwin Borman from the BMA, urged, "Refugee doctors are a valuable resource when the NHS needs more doctors.

"It makes moral and economic sense to help them overcome the difficulties they face."

Azhar Hammadi, an Iraqi, trained as a paediatrician. But she can't get a job in a hospital helping cure sick children.

She told Socialist Worker, "It all became too much. Now my job is as a health worker with refugees.

"When I left Iraq it was just six months before my graduation. I had been training for seven years in paediatrics.

"It was a big decision for me to sacrifice my future. But the government had started to target activists

This doctor trained for seven years to treat children. She can't get a job in a hospital Because she's a refugee

and some of my colleagues were killed.

"I managed to carry on my studies after leaving Iraq. When I eventually came to Britain in 1995 I wanted to go on to be a consultant.

"It has been too difficult, so much waiting, money, and problems.

"I have citizenship here.

"I'm British and I'm part of the workforce. But in this country people look down on you for being different."

The anti-refugee climate in Britain is the root cause of the problem. Refugees are presented as a burden, not people who could help everyone.

New Labour bans anyone in the



lems with English they should be eligible to receive free intensive training courses.

Instead, at the moment, many end up paying for all of this training themselves.

Even when they have passed, and finally get registered with the General Medical Council, refugees then suffer prejudice when applying for jobs.

The BMA and Refugee Council urged more work should be done to help refugee doctors.

Dr Edwin Borman from the BMA pointed out that it starts from the most basic level.

"Food, shelter, clothing, those basic needs. Only when these are

dealt with can we think about helping them to start studying again," he said.

"Frankly I don't how they cope. They barely have enough to live on, £35-45 a week, and pay for exams.

"It takes one and a half to two years to give them a reasonable chance of looking for a job.

"Refugee doctors should be a success story.

"The strength of this initiative should be positive images of refugees to balance the negative ones we have had to put up with in the media."

Words Helen Shooter
Pictures Jess Hurd reportdigital.co.uk

'I used to have my own doctor's surgery'

A GP at the conference from Iran spoke of his frustration that he cannot use his skills.

"I used to have my own doctor's surgery in Iran.

"Here I have tried many times to get a part time job as an auxiliary nurse. But I have found it impossible to get a job.

"I would like to be involved in the health system and to communicate with English people to improve my language.

It does not help to stay at home.

"Now I work as a volunteer in the community in south Manchester.

"I live on £54 a week. Out of that comes some rent money and bills to pay. I had the ability to earn good money in Iran. If it wasn't for the government I would go back there tomorrow. I really want to be a GP. I know they are needed by many people."



Communication Workers Union conference

The political ferment has reached everyone

THIS YEAR'S conference of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) was the most political ever.

There is sometimes a sense in the union that the "big politics" discussions are the preserve of relatively few activists and that the rest do not really get engaged until the nitty-gritty discussions about pay, jobs and hours.

If that were ever true, it certainly wasn't this year.

The hall was packed for debates about Iraq and Palestine, globalisation and the threat from the BNP.

It wasn't just the formal debates. Speeches on every issue touched on wider politics. The pensions discussions touched on the French mass strikes, the discussion of honorary membership led to a passionate argument about New Labour and the firefighters!

Most of the CWU delegates are manual workers in the Post Office or telecom firms and are instinctive Labour voters. They are the people who home secretary David Blunkett claims "back the war while the middle class liberals wring their hands".

Yet these delegates voted unanimously to support George Galloway against the witch-hunt inspired by New Labour. No delegates spoke against the union affiliating to the Stop the War Coalition.

The political ferment around the war has not just touched 100,000s of students, school students and activists. It has changed the worldview of many workers.

One sign of that was the sale of over 400 copies of Socialist Worker during the conference.

As a CWU delegate from the north east of England told Socialist Worker, "Up to a year ago I would have said that Blair was basically trustworthy and that the union should do its best to keep out of politics.

"Now I think differently about both those issues. The war has proved totally that Blair is a liar and I don't see how the union can abstain from such huge issues which are about the whole way the country is governed."

A fringe meeting, hosted by the rank and file paper Post Worker, brought around 150 delegates together to hear George Galloway speak. Many then discussed whether people on the left should stay and fight inside Labour or instead seek to build an alternative.

No single view emerged, but the debates are going on with a seriousness and an intensity far beyond anything that has gone before.

In the CWU engagement with wider issues is strongly encouraged by many in the leadership and, in particular, by union general secretary Billy Hayes. He has spoken at all the



big anti-war marches and at events organised by Globalise Resistance.

In a debate about the Tobin tax—a measure proposed to tax currency speculation—Billy Hayes told the conference, "Every day over \$1 trillion flows through the money markets. The vast majority of that is not about trade, it's about speculation.

"The G8 met in Evian and presided over a world where some are incredibly rich and some people starve, a world where some have wealth beyond dreams and some have to watch their children die."

Such speeches are a breath of fresh air.

But it is not enough for unions to speak out about war and globalisation. They also have to show they are fighting directly over working people's lives here.

Unions must do something about the bullying boss, the pay packet that doesn't stretch to the end of the month, the scandal that some postal workers do up to 70 hours a week and that British Telecom wants to export call centre jobs to India to slash costs.

The absence of action over such questions can cause cynicism and disunity. There were danger signs at the CWU conference.

The union was deeply split during the recent election battle between John Keggie and Dave Ward for the post of deputy general secretary. Some of this was a left-right split but there was also a geographical basis to the division.

There were renewed signs of this regionalism at conference, although there were also powerful voices calling for unity.

The most effective way to pull the union together is national action over pay and other issues.

The conference passed a motion calling for substantial increases in both basic pay and London weighting.

Steve Higginson from Merseyside told Socialist Worker, "We really need a battle over pay but there is a

fundamental question that has yet to be answered. Is the union going to argue over how big a pot of money is available for wages or just squabble over how the pot that the Post Office is ready to give gets distributed?

"It would be wrong to get more money by selling thousands of jobs or allowing management to butcher our conditions."

Post Office management's vision is to allow pay to rise on the basis of overturning present working conditions and jacking up productivity.

Deliveries, processing (sorting) and distribution (transport) are all facing job-cutting reviews which, if they are accepted, will trigger cash bonuses. These are essentially bribes, a bit of sugar on a very nasty pill.

This strategy used to be called the "road map to £300 a week" but, perhaps after recent events in the Middle East, is now often dubbed the "flightpath to £300".

The "flightpath" will see 12,000 people jettisoned as job losses bite because of the changes in deliveries. The CWU leadership has grudgingly gone along with this.

The conference discussed whether to accept the job losses in order to get increased pay. The executive's position was passed by only a wafer-thin majority.

However the executive was then defeated when delegates insisted that the agreement should go to a ballot of all Royal Mail workers—not just deliveries.

The rank and file paper Post Worker is likely to campaign against the deal.

Battles could flare up over this issue or others—such as London weighting or the Post Office's decision to stop using rail transport.

The confidence and politics generated during the war can increase demands for a real fight against Blair and the bosses here.

Charlie Kimber

'My university was linked to Cambridge'

ONE OF those at the conference spent six years studying to be a doctor in her home country and ended up working in Tesco's.

"I had to leave Sudan because it was very dangerous for us.

"I thought I would be able to work here without any pain because the university I

FIGURE IT OUT

2000

is the number of refugee doctors that could be working to improve the NHS and improve healthcare for everybody, but who don't because of the way the asylum and immigration system works.

'I claimed asylum but I didn't want benefits'

"Before I came to Britain from Albania in 1997 I was training in obstetrics and gynaecology.

"I claimed asylum but I didn't claim benefits. I wanted people to say that I knew how to find my way around and earn a living.

"The Home Office said I had a very good case and

they believed I had suffered—but not enough. I had to start appealing against their decision. I paid for it out of my own pocket. Then I spent two years looking for a job in my specialisation.

"I eventually got work as a staff nurse. But having a full time job on top of the exams, essays, studying...I did not want to give up but I hit a brick wall all the time.

"I know a lot of doctors who have been through the same troubles. I want to get back into medicine but it's been six years and inevitably I've lost some familiarity with current methods."

Dr Genc Rumani (right)

'I want to get back into medicine but the system stops me'

Socialist Review

The monthly magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

£2 from *Socialist Worker* sellers, or
Phone 020 7538 3308
Email sr@swp.org.uk
Write SR, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

YOUNG GIFTED AND BACK

Rob Hoveman writes on the opportunities for the left

Martin Smith on the state of the trade union movement

Iraqi activists speak out against the occupation

Plus Lindsey German celebrates the re-release of *The Leopard*



Asad Rehman (left) joins protesters at the G8 summit in Evian

Picture: Ray Smith

A new political home

Asad Rehman from the Stop the War Coalition opens a new series in Socialist Worker about where the movement goes from here

THE ANTI-war movement has to be seen in the context of what we built when we opposed war not just on Iraq but on Afghanistan. The strength of our movement was its breadth and its depth. The core of the movement has been increasing in size and in depth of knowledge.

We weren't just turning people out for demos—we built a real movement.

The anti-war movement is not just a tactical alliance over one issue. Rather, it is the politicisation of a whole new generation, both young and old.

There is a rising awareness of issues around imperialism, the Project for the New American Century, and oil. This is not just in one section of the population, but among a really wide layer of society.

So even if there is a dip in the level of activity, the movement is still larger than most movements are at their height.

People saw that in the beginning the anti-globalisation movement had a big impact on the anti-war movement.

Now I think it is the other way around. The anti-war movement is feeding back into the anti-globalisation movement.

You saw that in the protests at the G8 summit in Evian. Ordinary people showed a real affinity with the anti-war aspect of the march, with the anti-war slogans, chants and banners.

I saw the same thing at the European Social Forum in Florence and at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. The local

papers in Porto Alegre reported that the contingents that got the biggest applause were the Palestinian and anti-war groups.

You can go into any cafe or ride in a cab and people talk about how the war was about imperialism.

What used to be the language of the left is now the language of many, many people.

The involvement of the black and Muslim community at all levels of the anti-war movement was fantastically important.

This alliance gives us the opportunity to think strategically about other issues like welfare and poverty, and the disillusionment with New Labour over the war and over domestic issues.

Are we able to articulate the concerns of this layer of society, the concerns of people who are looking for a new political home, who are worried about privatisation, neo-liberal politics and so on?

Political ideas which once would have been seen as abstract are now the way people describe their personal experiences.

This is something we haven't seen for 20 or 30 years.

There are three groups we need to draw together—the Muslim community, the social movement and the trade unions.

These could form into an electoral force to offer an alternative to the politics of despair in places like Burnley and Oldham.

We can be in the process of refounding the Labour Party. Would that mean being inside Labour or outside Labour? Would that involve being a social movement or forming a political party? All these questions are fluid and up for discussion.

The mainstream parties are all in decline. They have shrinking numbers of activists. Many have resigned from Labour, but there is a danger they will just drift.

We want to create a space and a political home for them.

We have to recognise that we have even greater opportunities than came after the anti Vietnam War movement.

People have a real sense of responsibility. No one wants to make mistakes and let this opportunity slip.

I was in the Labour Party for years. I joined when I was 14 and left when they dumped Clause Four.

This morning I heard an announcement about the health service. I am still amazed at how right wing New Labour are. They do things the Tories aren't do.

More and more people are so disillusioned with Labour, on international and domestic issues.

People in the anti-war movement say we came close to bringing Blair down. Well, we still might do it.

Blair relies on people trusting him, but they don't any more. It does remind me of Margaret Thatcher. We thought she was invincible, but when she became a liability it was only a matter of time till she was dumped.

Dynamic space

The question is, what do we replace Blair with? Another New Labour clone?

I can't see people flocking back to Labour unless there are massive changes.

If there is a viable alternative, people will come around it. This is our job.

We don't just want a movement of the left. We don't need another revolutionary party. There is the Socialist Workers Party already. We need an old Labour party with revolutionaries in it, like the Scottish Socialist Party.

They went from one MSP to six because people want to punish Blair by going for a viable political alternative. If they can do it in Scotland, we can do it here.

We need a democratic, socialist party like Rifondazione in Italy. Rifondazione involves trade unions, community groups and the anti-globalisation movement.

It is an inclusive organisation that has had a huge impact on politics in Italy.

A dynamic space is opening up.

There are groups like Muslims for Justice and Peace and the Newham Public Affairs Campaign that mobilise for demos but also involve people in wider political campaigns,

lobbying MPs, challenging Islamophobia and so on.

There is a deeper political maturity in the Muslim community than ever before.

On the demos, there were lots of young Muslim women acting as stewards and helping to organise things—who would have thought that would be possible a few years ago?

It is something that those of us who occupy both spaces, the Muslim and the left, could only dream about.

The Muslim community is not a single bloc. But it is a community that is disproportionately affected by poor educational opportunities, by high rates of unemployment and so on.

There are traditionally two polarities in the community, a situation that goes back a long way.

The mosques and the Muslim infrastructure provided a place of worship and a way the community could gather together.

From that came the Muslim youth movements of the 1980s. These second generation Muslims became political over fighting racism and fascism. They took their fight to the Labour Party and to local communities.

But we took our eye off the religious institutions. Right wing Islamists were gaining influence in the mosques.

They pushed the idea that the mosques, local councillors and the police could be the advocates for all Muslims and represent them.

The anti-war movement was the chance to recapture the mosques. The involvement of young Muslims was a symptom of the alienation people felt, the kind of frustration that exploded in the riots in Burnley and Bradford a couple of years ago.

But the anti-war movement meant that the progressive elements in the community won the battle over engagement with wider society. So the mosques became another centre of organising against the war.

The right wing Islamists told people that they were on their own, that the West was at war with Islam.

But young Muslims went on the anti-war demos and found huge numbers alongside

them waving Palestinian flags, and said, "How can you tell us we are alone?"

And also the fact that the movement was global had a big impact. Pictures of the demos here on Al Jazeera had a big impact in the Middle East.

This created space for a new working relationship between what I call political Islam and the secular left to develop.

And this is happening here. The Stop the War Coalition was a great example of how different groups can work together.

I was invited to speak to school students at Mulberry Girls School, in Tower Hamlets. The other speaker was Lord Faulkner, from the Home Office.

He backed the war, of course, but he spent time talking about the Stop the War Coalition. He had to recognise that the movement had done more to bring different sections of the community together than anything else.

He said he had to give us credit for the fact that he was being asked about imperialism and international relations by 14 year old school girls.

Some Muslim organisations say we are marginalised because we don't have Muslim voices representing us.

The war showed that it wasn't about being a Muslim, it was about politics. That's why George Galloway, a Scottish Catholic, is the MP for the Muslim community.

Traditionally, Islamic groups said you can't work with the left. Now people are saying that we occupy similar space and we can work together.

Now we have no communication problems. Different groups have worked together and trust each other. And as people are saying this and experimenting, their politics are developing all the time.

Asad is speaking at the Marxism 2003 event in London. He joins a platform on 'Racism and fascism today'

Saturday 5 July at 11.45am

MARXISM2003

For details see advert on page 3



in my view

Sell it like Beckham

WILL DAVID Beckham leave Manchester United? That's the question every tabloid newspaper is asking.

And in the chase to get the latest scoop, the exploitative world of big business and football is being exposed.

One friend of Beckham says he feels Manchester United have betrayed him. He feels he is being "traded round like a piece of meat".

I can hear the groans already: "Surely Martin is not going to ask us to sympathise with one of the world's richest football stars?" But he has got a point. Of course football has always been about making money and buying and selling players on the open market.

But now with the possible transfer of Beckham, football agents have gone one step further. They openly boast on TV of selling "The David Beckham Product".

He is no longer seen as a footballer or a person. He is a commodity, a brand for multinational corporations to buy and sell.

If you are so inclined, you can now get reports on Beckham's marketability and the estimated share price increase of any club he may join.

Some jumped-up City type has even worked out Beckham's different market values as an individual, married or divorced.

Just imagine. There are City analysts praying that he doesn't get a divorce. Why? Because they will get a bigger return on their investment if he remains married!

You see, multinational corporations have a problem. If a suited fat cat from Shell, GlaxoSmith-Kline or even Manchester United plc came knocking on your door asking for your money or support any sane person would slam it in their face.

Therein lies the strength of Beckham. He is the respectable face of corporate football.

Searching out new markets

Manchester United has an annual turnover of £146.1 million a year. Merchandising accounts for around £10 million and yes, you guessed it, Beckham products dominate.

Analysts believe the club's base is something in excess of 50 million people. The club has its eyes firmly set on foreign markets.

The United brand has a 79 percent name awareness in China, which could add another 20 million supporters to United's fan base.

The club wants to open up this market. Its 2002 business strategy document states:

"With 50 million fans worldwide, our twin-track business strategy is to grow existing and new domestic revenues while also unlocking the substantial commercial potential represented by the club's global fan base."

Beckham is the man who can unlock doors.

In the wake of his recent much publicised tour of the US and the Far East the promotion men follow in behind. They are searching out new markets, selling television rights and football merchandise as they go.

So why do United want to let Beckham go? They now fear that Beckham is becoming bigger than the club, and that is a dangerous thing.

For the last few years the club has been preparing for his departure and making sure that it is carried out on the club's terms and at the same time protecting its profits.

Beckham's huge popularity meant that in November 2000 United were able to sign a deal with Nike worth £300 million over 13 years.

The whole business of shirt sales has been handed over to Nike. The club now receives a guaranteed income rather than depending on the popularity of their players.

Added to the £30 million price tag on Beckham, that represents judicious business. Management have now decided that they have exploited Beckham to the limit and they want to cash in on their investment.

But no one should feel sorry for Posh and Becks. They will go on living the high life. At the last estimate they were worth a staggering £125 million and any new signing will see Beckham pocket another £32 million over four years.

Martin Smith

REVIEWS

TV A new film charts George Orwell's journey from a privileged background to socialism

FROM ETON TO BARCELONA

THIS YEAR is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the writer and socialist George Orwell. BBC2 is showing documentary-drama George Orwell: A Life in Pictures this Saturday, which charts both his artistic and political development.

The most intriguing question about Orwell is how an Eton schoolboy went on to become perhaps the greatest critic of class privilege and tyranny writing in the English language.

Orwell was the product of successive elite institutions of the British Empire at a time when it still directly controlled vast swathes of the world.

From a "lower upper middle class family", as he very precisely described it, Orwell went to public school and suffered the usual brutalities.

Eton's role, then as now, was to prepare the sons of the ruling class for taking up the reins of power. Orwell left Eton and joined the imperial police force in British-run Burma, and became, in his words, "part of the machinery of despotism".

This experience left him revolted. He left the Burmese police and was to become increasingly radicalised in the 1930s as economic depression swept the advanced capitalist countries, throwing millions onto the dole.

He began to identify with the poor and dispossessed. He worked as a waiter in Paris and lived among the homeless in London. He wrote about these experiences in Down and Out in Paris and London.

He then embarked on a journey through the industrial north ravaged by mass unemployment. For all his sympathy with the poor and the working class, this is still a picture of workers as victims.

It was Orwell's decision to go to Spain to help in the fight against



George Orwell, played by Chris Langham, fought against fascism in the Spanish Civil War

Franco and fascism that was to be a decisive turning point in his life.

Something more than Orwell expected greeted him there. The workers of Barcelona, where Orwell had headed, had not been content just to fight Franco but had taken power themselves.

As Orwell puts it in his brilliant record of these events *Homage to Catalonia*, "workers were in the saddle". The working class were not mere victims, but actively transforming society.

This revolution was crushed. The Communist Party played a crucial role. Orwell witnessed this first hand as he had returned from the front in May 1937 when the revolution was suppressed.

Fascism triumphed in Spain and Orwell was determined to halt its further advance. The film shows how he grappled with finding a socialist response to the imminence of war.

He was convinced that the threat

from Hitler would produce the same response among British workers that Franco's threat had evoked in Spain.

He even thought that the Home Guard created by the government (of Dad's Army fame) would radicalise into Spanish-style workers' militias! Yet with the failure of any revolution to materialise, Orwell became increasingly disorientated and pessimistic.

He even joined the BBC's war propaganda unit for two years.

Unable to stomach this any longer, Orwell left and wrote the novels for which he is best known, his parable of revolution *Animal Farm* and the big brother world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The film is done as a series of mock newsreels with an actor playing Orwell.

This is interspersed with interviews with people who knew Orwell and genuine contemporary news footage. This is slightly confusing.

The film tends to take the common sense view that all revolutions end in tyranny.

Despite this it is still well worth a watch.

Above all it should act as a good reason to read Orwell himself, especially *Homage to Catalonia*.

Mark Thomas

George Orwell: A Life in Pictures is broadcast on BBC2 this Saturday at 9.05pm. All of the books mentioned above are available from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarks.uk.com

On television

Five to catch this week

Surviving Extremes
Monday, 9pm, C4

Interesting series about people and harsh environments. This week it features the Tubu of the Sahara.

Early Doors
Monday, 9.30pm, BBC2
Comedy in the tradition of The Royle Family.

Fighting the War
Sunday, 9pm, BBC2
Seven-part documentary series on the Iraq war starts. How much of the truth will it reveal?

Coolies: The Story of Indian Slavery
Monday, 9pm, BBC4
How people were moved around the world, and the crimes of the British imperialists in India.

State of Play
Sunday, 9pm, BBC1
This constantly interesting thriller about the media, politicians, oil and the state is nearing its conclusion.

Compiled by Charlie Kimber

BOOK

Prison is not a 'holiday camp'

From the Inside
Ruth Wyner
Aurum Press, £16.99

RUTH WYNER and her colleague John Brock were sentenced to five and four years in prison in 1999. Their crime was to respect the confidentiality of the homeless people who used their hostel.

The police charged them with wilfully allowing drugs to be used and sold on their premises. Their conviction had huge consequences for all of those workers who, against all

obstacles, attempt to support the most vulnerable in society.

This is an account of Ruth's experience of prison life and her battle to retain her sanity.

She points out that most of the women in prison are victims themselves.

Many are addicted to alcohol or drugs as a way of dealing with a life of poverty and isolation.

Prison is rife with drugs. Ruth points out that in 1999 out of 84,911 mandatory drug tests in prisons 17,789 were positive.

Some of the most interesting parts of this book are the points

Ruth makes about young offenders, women prisoners, homelessness and the legal system.

She points out that Britain's prison population is the highest per capita in Europe and it is expected to increase further.

If you were ever in any doubt about the reality of prison this harrowing, emotional and painful account will shatter any illusion. Prison is not a "holiday camp".

It is one of the most degrading, dehumanising, and soul-destroying environments.
Beccy Palmer

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@swp.org.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BARNSELEY
Who benefits from Third World oppression?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Barnsley Central Library,
Shambles St.

BATH
How do we fight fascism?
Sun 15 Jun, 4pm,
Percy Community Centre,
New King St.

BIRKENHEAD
Weapons of mass deception:
does the media control our
ideas?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Oxton Green Community Centre,
Christchurch Rd.

BIRMINGHAM HARBOURNE
The grand strategy of the
American Empire
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm,
Open University Centre,
Harbourne High St.

BIRMINGHAM KING'S HEATH
Palestine: road map to peace?
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm,
Dance Workshop,
Mosley Rd.

BIRMINGHAM SPARKHILL
Do the media control our
minds?
Thu 12 Jun, 7pm,
Shahenshah Restaurant,
Ladypool Rd.

BOLTON
Confronting the new
rulers of the world: the
movement after Evian
Tue 17 Jun, 6.30pm,
Bolton Town Hall
(off Newport St).

BRIGHTON
Martin Luther King and the
politics of civil disobedience
Thu 26 Jun, 7.30pm,
Phoenix Community Centre,
Phoenix Place.

BURY
Does the media control our
ideas?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Arts and Crafts Centre,
Broad St.
With Chris Bambery.

CAMBRIDGE
Karl Marx:
the first anti-capitalist?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
CB2 Internet Cafe, Norfolk St.
With Chris Nineham.

CANTERBURY
Do Western workers benefit
from Third World oppression?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Pascucci's Cafe, High St.

CHESTERFIELD
Is there an alternative to
capitalism?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Assembly Hall,
Urban Education Centre,
Marketplace.

COLCHESTER
The bloody history of British
imperialism
Mon 23 Jun, 8pm,
RAD Hall, South Way.

COVENTRY
Is revolution possible?
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm,
Methodist Central Hall.

CRAWLEY
Is fascism still a threat in
2003?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Three Bridges Community Centre,
Gales Place.

DONCASTER
Is fascism still a threat in the
21st century?
Thu 19 Jun, 7pm,
Women's Centre, Cleveland St.

FAVERSHAM
Road map or dead end:
can Palestine be free?
Mon 23 Jun, 7.30pm,
Anchor, Abbey St.

GATESHEAD
Lenin: what can we learn from
a man who made a revolution?
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm,
Trinity Centre, High St
(opp Woolworths).

HARLOW
Is fascism still a threat in
2003?
Wed 18 Jun, 8pm,
Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm
(by ambulance station).

HOVE
What will a future socialist
society look like?
Wed 16 Jun, 7.30pm, Vallance
Community Centre, Sackville Rd.
With Paul Thatcher.



The battle of Gingindlovu in 1879 saw bitter fighting between South African Zulus and British invaders. The bloody history of British imperialism is one of the topics discussed at Marxist forums this week

HUDDERSFIELD
Lenin and the Russian
Revolution
Thu 19 Jun, 6pm,
Coffeevolution, Church St.

HULL
Palestine:
road map to nowhere?
Tue 17 Jun, 7.15pm, Avenues
Adult Education Centre, Park Ave.

LEEDS BEESTON
Do Western workers benefit
from Third World oppression?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Tunstall Road Community Centre.

LEEDS CHAPELTOWN
The politics of disability
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
West Indian Centre,
Laycock Place.

LEICESTER
The bloody history of British
imperialism
Mon 16 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cafe Mozart, London Rd.
With Chris Bambery.

LIVERPOOL AIGBURTH
Weapons of mass deception:
does the media control our
ideas?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Collect Gallery,
Lark Lane.

LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE
Lenin: history's hidden
democrat
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Magnet Cafe, Hardman St.

LIVERPOOL TOXTETH
Is the US Empire invincible?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.15pm,
Wicked Foods,
Upper Parliament St.

LOWESTOFT
Is this the best democracy we
can get?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Havelock, Love Rd.

LUTON
Martin Luther King and the
politics of civil disobedience
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm,
High Town Recreation Centre,
Old Bedford Rd.

MANCHESTER CHEETHAM HILL
Is revolution possible?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Saffron Restaurant
(bottom of Cheetham Hill Rd).

MANCHESTER CHORLTON
The bloody history of British
imperialism
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Chorlton Library.

MANCHESTER HULME
Who are the new rulers of the
world?
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm,
Hulme Library,
Stratford Rd.

MANCHESTER LEVENSHULME
Divide and rule: why asylum
seekers are not to blame
Thu 26 Jun, 7.30pm,
Sultan Cafe,
Stockport Rd.
With Ed Mynott.

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Do Western workers benefit
from Third World oppression?
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm,
Jaffa Restaurant,
Wilmslow Rd.

MARGATE
What would a future socialist
society look like?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Help Centre, Hawley Square.

NEATH
If missiles can cross borders,
why can't people?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Mocha Jo's Cafe
(nr Safeway's fountain).
With John Duff.

NEWCASTLE HEATON
Malcolm X
Wed 18 Jun, 7pm,
Truick Road Community Centre.

NORTHAMPTON
Lenin: what can we learn from
a man who made a revolution?
Thu 26 Jun, 6.45pm,
Cafe Msaada, Kettering Rd.

NORWICH
Do Western workers benefit
from Third World oppression?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Owen's Cafe Bar,
1 Farmer's Avenue
(behind Bell Hotel).

NOTTINGHAM HYSON GREEN
Divide and rule:
the politics of racism
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm,
Forest Fields Community Centre,
Sturton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Is this the best democracy we
can get?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Katmando, Mansfield Rd.

PLYMOUTH
Whose law is it:
theirs or ours?
Mon 23 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cafe Marx, upstairs,
Voodoo Lounge, Mayflower St.

PRESTON FRENCHWOOD
Does the media control our
ideas?
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm,
Unity Centre, Shepherd St
(off Church St).

ROTHERHAM
What is the grand strategy of
the American Empire?
Wed 25 Jun, 7pm,
Rotherham Library.
With Alex Callinicos.

ST ALBANS
Martin Luther King and the
politics of civil disobedience
Mon 16 Jun, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Trinity Church
(cnr Victoria St/Beaconsfield Rd).

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
From people power to
workers' power?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Highfields Library, London Rd.

SOUTHAMPTON
What is fascism and how do
we fight it?
Thu 26 Jun, 8pm,
Cook House, St Mary's St.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Road map or dead end: can
Palestine be free?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Room 631, Sutton College,
Lichfield Rd.

WALSALL
After Evian: what other world
is possible?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Palfrey Community Centre,
Milton Rd.

YORK
Palestine: road map to peace
or dead end?
Wed 25 Jun, 8pm, Priory Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON

ALDWYCH
Globalisation, war and
resistance: a report back
from Evian
Thu 12 Jun, 6pm,
St Clements Building,
London School of Economics.

ARCHWAY
Lenin: what can we learn from
a man who made a revolution?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Bonjour Bonsoir, Holloway Rd.

BARKING
Martin Luther King and the
politics of civil disobedience
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Barking Library.

BRENT
Globalisation and resistance
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cafe Grafenola,
83 Devon Hill Lane.

BROMLEY
Road map or dead end:
can Palestine ever be free?
Mon 23 Jun, 7pm,
United Reformed Church,
Widmore Rd.

CAMDEN
Martin Luther King and the
politics of civil disobedience
Wed 25 Jun, 6.30pm,
Marlina's Cafe, Camden High St
(opp Argos).

CROYDON
Human nature: is it to blame
for greed and war?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

DALSTON
Does the movement need
political parties?
Thu 26 Jun, 7.30pm,
Halkevi Centre,
Stoke Newington Rd.
With Richard McEwan.

DULWICH
Do all revolutions end in
tyranny?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Goose Green Centre
(cnr East Dulwich Rd/Addis Rd).

EAST HAM
Is there an alternative to
capitalism?
Thu 19 Jun, 7pm,
Froud Centre, Taront Ave
(off Romford Rd).

ENFIELD
Can the American left fight
back against Bush?
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm,
Edmonton Green Leisure Centre,
Plevna Rd. *With Andy Strouthous.*

HAMMERSMITH
Malcolm X
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cafe Mocha, Shepherd's Bush
Rd. *With Kevin Ovenden.*

HIGHBURY
Palestine: road map to peace
or dead end?
Thu 19 Jun, 6.30pm,
Stingray Cafe, 36 Highbury Park.
With Tom Unterrainer.

HONOR OAK
Democracy: is this the best we
can get?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Ackroyd Community Centre,
Ackroyd Rd.

HOUNSLOW
Why sexism sells
Wed 25 Jun, 7.30pm,
Hounslow Community Centre,
Montague Rd.

ILFORD
Divide and rule:
why refugees are not to blame
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cafe Noire, York Rd (nr Æ).

KENTISH TOWN
Road map or dead end: can
Palestine be free?
Thu 26 Jun, 6.30pm, Cafe Renoir.

LADBROKE GROVE
How can we rid the world of
racism?
Tue 24 Jun, 7.30pm,
Paddington Arts Centre,
Woodville Rd.

LEWISHAM
Lenin: what can we learn from
a man who led a revolution?
Wed 25 Jun, 7pm,
Hunkarim Restaurant
(cnr Lee High Rd/Marischal Rd).

LONDON FIELDS
Does the media control our
ideas?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Pasta Casa, Broadway Market.

MUSWELL HILL
Congo: Africa's forgotten war
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm,
Muswell Hill Centre.

SEVEN SISTERS
What's the alternative to
capitalism?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Duygu Cafe, 105 West Green Rd.

STAMFORD HILL
What would a socialist society
look like?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm,
Cyprus House Cafe,
Manor Parade, Manor Rd.

STREATHAM
Revolt and resistance in Latin
America
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm,
Boogalu's, Sunny Hill Rd.

WOOLWICH
Palestine: is there a road map
to freedom?
Wed 18 Jun, 7pm,
Friends Cafe, Barnard Close
(off Powis St).



INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under
capitalism. A new society can only be
constructed when they collectively seize
control of that wealth and plan its
production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up
or reformed as the established Labour and
trade union leaders say. It has to be
overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament,
army, police and judiciary cannot be
taken over and used by the working class.
They grew up under capitalism and are
designed to protect the ruling class against
the workers.

The working class needs an entirely
different kind of state—a workers' state
based upon councils of workers' delegates
and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be
used to protect propaganda against the
present system.

Only the mass action of the workers
themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a
worldwide struggle. We campaign for
solidarity with workers in other countries.
We oppose everything which turns
workers from one country against those
from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We
oppose all immigration controls. We
support the right of black people and other
oppressed groups to organise their own
defence. We support all genuine national
liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates
that a socialist revolution cannot survive in
isolation in one country. In Russia the
result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar
system was later established by Stalinist
parties. We support the struggle of workers
in these countries against both private and
state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and
political equality of women. We are for an
end to all forms of discrimination against
lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant
sections of the working class have to be
organised into a revolutionary socialist
party. Such a party can only be built by
activity in the mass organisations of the
working class.

We have to prove in practice to other
workers that reformist leaders and
reformist ideas are opposed to their own
interests. We have to build a rank and file
movement within the unions.

Join the socialists

Fill in this form and send it to PO Box 82, London E3 3LH	
Name	E-mail
Address	
Postcode	
TU/college/school	Phone

Links

Anti Nazi League
www.anl.org.uk
(020 7924 0333
Globalise Resistance
www.resist.org.uk
(020 7053 2071
Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
(020 7053 2153/4/5/6
Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
(020 7791 3138
Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
(020 7987 9989
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
(07941 566 183
Spark
www.onesolution.org.uk
(07905 998 675
Scottish Socialist Party
www.scottishsocialistparty.org
(0141 221 7714

Local SWP

Barnsley
07881 558 590
Birmingham
07968 551 870
Black Country
07748 653 627
Bradford
07811 403 299
Brighton
07818 027 408
Bristol
07711 718 519
Cambridge
07950 142 464
Camden & Islington
07984 674 582
Cardiff
07815 775 819
Central London
07957 316 094
Chesterfield
07881 558 590
Coventry
07712 047 873
East Anglia
07946 269 024

East London
07753 697 743
Exeter
07939 558 115
Hackney
07788 770 741
Haringey & Enfield
07736 064 045
Home Counties
07905 589 865
Huddersfield
07986 688 842
Kent
07950 610 257
Lancashire East
07968 952 180
Lancashire West
07931 725 633
Leeds & West Yorkshire
07734 265 291
Leicester
07791 102 291
Manchester
07946 413 763
Merseyside
07952 410 718
Norwich
07734 903 378

Nottingham
07766 161 595
Plymouth
07803 620 390
Portsmouth
07801 290 411
Scotland (SW Platform)
07855 023 739
Sheffield
07739 153 472
South East London
07951 737 003
South London
07734 706 256
Southampton
07958 311 922
Swansea
07759 901 392
Thames Valley
07929 618 579
Tyneside
07947 180 994
Waltham Forest
07796 697 271
West London
07958 996 777
York
07984 132 371



FRANCE



French workers take to the streets

Picture: Martin Shakeshaft

Crunch time for pension strikers

THE TRIAL of strength between French workers and their Tory government reached a decisive stage on Tuesday.

The government pressed ahead with its attacks on workers' pension rights, presenting its plans in the country's National Assembly.

The plan would force workers to work for more years and pay more to qualify for a lower pension than the one offered now.

After what was a bank holiday weekend, trade unions called another national strike and round of demonstrations on Tuesday.

The strike once again saw much of transport across France shut down.

Teachers, the vanguard of the movement, once again struck and

marched in massive numbers.

Bank workers, council workers, some engineering workers and many others also staged strikes.

The battle over pension rights has been raging for almost a month now. There have been repeated national strikes of public sector and some private sector workers.

Millions join fight

Tuesday's action was the third strike in four weeks. And each one-day stoppage has seen millions strike and up to two million people join demonstrations.

Some groups have gone further than one-day strikes. Teachers in thousands of schools have been taking indefinite strike action.

As well as the pensions plan they

are also battling an attack on education which would mean job cuts and could open the way for privatisation.

Some rail and public transport workers have also gone beyond one-day stoppages, staying out after the last national one-day strike last week.

The government is combining a hard stance with manoeuvres aimed at dividing the opposition.

It has sought—with only limited success—to keep key groups of workers out of the pension battle by promising that their special pension arrangements will not be affected.

It has also offered some concessions to teachers, and was due to meet teachers' leaders again on Tuesday.

Key moment

The battle in education faced a key moment this week, with France's national "baccalaureat" exams (roughly equivalent to Britain's A-levels) due to get under way on Thursday.

The government was seeking to turn parents, students and wider public opinion against the teachers by raising the prospect of disruption to the exams.

Teachers' union leaders responded by threatening to maintain their strikes through Thursday unless the government backed down.

The two sides stood nose to nose as Socialist Worker went to press. One side is likely to blink before Thursday and whichever side does will shape what happens next.

Trade unions must unleash full fury

THE French government has been aided by the divisions inside the main parliamentary opposition Socialist Party (roughly equivalent to Britain's Labour).

Newly elected Socialist Party leader Francois Hollande has sought to rebuild the party's fortunes by reflecting the popular mood against the

government's plans. He has even joined some demonstrations.

But key Socialist Party figures have come out in support of the Tory government plans.

Last week former Socialist Party prime minister Michel Rocard declared, "To call for the withdrawal of the government's plan is stupid. When we come back to office we

would pursue similar policies."

This has encouraged the government to stand firm.

Some key union leaders are also allowing the government to believe it can push its plans through.

These union leaders, in the CGT and FO federations, are calling for workers

to strike—but are holding back from unleashing the full power of workers in all-out strikes.

This is causing frustration among some groups of workers, who last week blockaded rail lines and motorways, and occupied buildings in some areas.

There were also some attacks on local offices of the Medef

bosses' organisation, which supports the government. In La Rochelle in western France the Medef office was burned down.

The key to winning the pensions battle is to spread the all-out strikes among wider groups of workers—and to press union leaders to stop fighting with one hand tied behind their backs.

ZIMBABWE

Strikers shut country down despite repression

ZIMBABWE IS in ferment after a big strike closed down much of the country's economy last week.

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the main parliamentary opposition to President Mugabe, called the action as an intended "final push" to bring down the government.

It failed to do that but won wide support, especially in the cities, from people who are fed up with food shortages, soaring unemployment, collapsing public services and lack of democratic rights.

The MDC clearly still has strong support from large sectors of workers.

The stay-away from work lasted five days and closed many factories, banks and shops. Some workplaces closed because their bosses want Mugabe out. But in most cases management wanted to stay open but workers did not turn up.

Security forces and Mugabe's party militia killed at least one opposition protester and mobilised in large numbers to prevent demonstrations in city centres.

Morgan Tsvangirai, the opposition MDC leader, was arrested twice and now

faces treason charges.

Other senior MDC officials arrested include Japhet Ndabeni-Ncube, the mayor of Bulawayo, and Tendai Biti, a Harare MP.

The repression is real. But Bush and Blair are using it in an entirely hypocritical way.

The US State Department last week denounced Mugabe for responding to peaceful attempts at public protests with "an ongoing wave of violence and brutality".

Although it is horrible, Mugabe's crackdown does not compare to the way the US forces sometimes deal with protest in Iraq.

Further action in Zimbabwe is now planned. Mugabe's government looks increasingly vulnerable. But there are many questions about what will replace it.

Workers and the poor will have to insist that their interests dominate in a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, not those of managers and multinationals.

The MDC's favoured policies of opening up markets and working with Western governments will be disastrous. Such policies also make it harder to mobilise people to risk their lives to bring down the government.

PERU

Mass action rocks the man from the IMF

MASS STRIKES and protests rocked the South American country of Peru as anger exploded against the government's International Monetary Fund (IMF) backed policies.

Hundreds of thousands of teachers have been on strike for four weeks demanding higher wages. They have been joined on strike and in demonstrations by students, small-scale farmers, health workers and others.

Just over a week ago President Alejandro Toledo declared a state of emergency. Troops were sent onto the streets and clashes left scores of workers injured and one student dead.

But the attempt at repression failed. Teachers stayed out on strike and tens of thousands of workers marched, in total defiance of the state of emergency.

This forced the government to broker a deal with teachers' leaders who are now consulting their members on it.

The teachers' specific grievance was that Toledo had not honoured an election promise to raise their wages.

The deal under discussion would see teachers get an immediate

15 percent rise, with a pledge that salaries would be doubled by 2006.

Toledo was elected after the popular uprising which forced former president Alberto Fujimori out nearly three years ago.

Fujimori ruled for over a decade and created a near dictatorship, with savage repression and worsening economic conditions.

The former World Bank adviser Toledo pledged to create one million jobs a year but official unemployment figures stand at over 10 percent.

Over half of Peru's 27 million people live on less than 75p a day.

Toledo has made things worse by agreeing to impose strict spending limits in a deal with the IMF aimed at ensuring world bankers continue to get debt payments.

Fewer than one in seven Peruvians now support Toledo's government.

The protests in defiance of the state of emergency, and the fact that the government has offered concessions, shows that the power of mass protest that toppled the dictator Fujimori can also derail Toledo and his IMF backers.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

In brief

March says no to new runway

OME 500 people marched against plans for a third runway at London's Heathrow airport last Saturday.

A third runway at Heathrow would require the demolition of hundreds of homes, local schools and churches, destroying two village communities.

The protest had a lively carnival atmosphere, with plenty of placards and chanting.

SIMON BASKETTER

Group 4 should be in the dock

NE OF the defendants on trial over last year's fire at the Yarl's Wood refugee centre run by group 4 has had the case against him thrown out of court.

Another defendant had all charges dropped.

But Klodjan Gaba had only a brief taste of victory last week.

"Klodjan walked out of the dock only to be rearrested immediately and taken all the way to Scotland to the Dungavel refugee detention centre," explained one campaigner.

The trial of the remaining even defendants continues.

■ **For more details on where to send messages of support and donations e-mail sady_camp_aign@yahoo.co.uk**

PCS elections now under way

OME 288,000 civil servants in the PCS union are voting in national executive elections.

The Democracy slate of the Socialist Left Unity group and the PCS Democrats is standing in an attempt to overturn the right wing Moderates group who have dominated the union.

The Left Unity website has resources and guidance for all CS members who want to maximise the vote. Go to www.voteforunity.org.uk

Defending jobs and claimants

CIVIL SERVANTS in job centres and social security offices in east London have pledged a fight against threatened office closures which could see 173 jobs go.

Local PCS union branch chair Oliur Rahman says, "Staff are extremely worried about the job cuts and the effect they will have on those who use local benefits and job centre offices."

"Rather than providing a reduced service to the most needy members of the public the department should provide properly staffed service."

Refugee protest against injustice

HUNGER strike in Margate in Kent by 24 refugees ended on Sunday.

A similar protest began in Margate on Monday where up to 10 people were refusing food.

The protests are against section 55 of the Asylum and Immigration Act, which withdraws all accommodation and food from people if they fail to claim within a certain time after entering Britain.

Kamran from Azerbaijan told Socialist Worker, "My wife and I arrived a few weeks ago. We washed and rested before going to claim asylum. We were told we must be lying because we were too clean."

JON FLAIG

■ **Refugees, Racism and War—East Kent Human Rights Fair, Sunday 22 June from 10.30am, Quarterdeck, Zion Place, Cliftonville, Margate.**

Firefighters

Take matters into our own hands

ACTIVISTS WERE fighting to stage off surrender at a special conference of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on Thursday of this week as Socialist Worker went to press.

The FBU executive and general secretary Andy Gilchrist have gone flat out over the last few weeks to persuade firefighters and control staff to accept an awful deal to end their long-running pay dispute.

The deal struck with the employers, backed by the government, paves the way for cuts and local attacks on conditions. It falls a long way short of the pay rise FBU members voted nine to one to strike for.

There is a groundswell of feeling against the deal across Britain, despite understandable

demoralisation over the way the dispute has been drawn out with the initiative constantly surrendered to the government.

The unofficial 30k website has been running results from votes at FBU branches. It showed between 60 and 75 percent of stations rejecting the deal.

"But that does not necessarily translate into a vote at the conference to reject it," says Paul Embury from the FBU in Islington, north London, and a member of the editorial board of the Red Watch rank and file paper.

"There is a feeling against the deal everywhere. Whether it breaks through into votes against it and strong mandates on delegates depends on

organisation.

"If you don't have effective organisation on the stations arguing for rejection and answering why we have ended up here, then the weariness with the dispute dominates.

"That's where people vote to accept, not because the offer's any good, but because they do not see an alternative.

Lesson

"The executive have been organising to end this dispute on terrible terms. The great lesson is that we need rank and file organisation that can reject that.

"We will need it if the conference rejects the deal, because we know our leadership do not want to return to strikes.

London weighting strike



SCHOOL SUPPORT staff were on the picket line at John Scurr school in Tower Hamlets, east London, on Monday morning.

They and hundreds more workers employed by local councils across London were on strike all this week as part of their continuing fight for an increase in the London weighting allowance they get for the extra costs of living and working in the capital.

Most of those out were in selected schools, as part of rolling action called by their Unison union. Smaller groups of housing, parking and library workers were also out in some boroughs.

Picture: John McLoughlin

Journalists

Tactics debate an urgent need

THE ALL-OUT strike by journalists in Bradford was set to end on Wednesday as Socialist Worker went to press.

Members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) have been striking against a below-inflation pay rise offered by Newsquest bosses.

The decision to go back was influenced by the fact that protection from being sacked while on strike was running out. Under the terms of New Labour's anti-union laws workers can be sacked after eight weeks on strike.

Strikers were due to meet in Bradford on Tuesday to decide whether to reballoon for further action, which could renew protection from sacking for another eight weeks.

Bob Smith, joint father of the chapel (workplace shop steward), said, "The dispute is still active and we have not settled yet. There is the possibility to go back out on strike in the future but we will have to see what the chapel thinks."

Newsquest Media, which is owned by media giant Gannett, made £69 million last year but pays graduate trainee staff as little as £12,000.

If the Bradford workers go back it would be the second dispute involving NUJ members and Newsquest where this has happened when action has come up against the eight week limit.

NUJ members at Newsquest titles in Bury and Bolton did the same last month.

The strategy of calling off action when faced with the limitations of the anti-union laws is a potentially disastrous way of fighting.

It allows bosses to sit tight and know they can see workers return to work after a few weeks.

Much better would be for the national union to organise the kind of solidarity which can hit companies hard and quickly win disputes.

And the NUJ could tell companies like Newsquest that if they use anti-union laws to sack workers the union would meet fire with fire, call out Newsquest NUJ members nationally and appeal to other unions for active solidarity, **KATE COYNE**

Campaign against national tests

SATs conference proves a hit

THE 28 June conference called to launch the campaign to boycott the government's SATs school tests looks set to be massive.

Already parents, teachers and governors from all over the country have committed themselves to attending the conference.

Former NUT president John Illingworth will address the conference along with children's writer Alan

Gibbons.

Most importantly, we will hear from parents, support staff and, yes, even children themselves about how tests are ruining life in schools.

The conference will be more than a rally. Everyone who attends should emerge with a clear plan about what they can do to make this campaign more effective.

The conference fee is £5 for

NUT members and absolutely free for anyone else. Lunch and a creche are provided. **JON BERRY, secretary, Hertfordshire NUT**

■ **Boycott SATs conference, Saturday 28 June, 11.30am-3.30pm, South Camden Community School, London. For more details phone or fax 01727 835 554, or e-mail secretary@hertfordshire.nut.org.uk or nutjon@aol.com**

GMB conference

THE SENSE that New Labour has betrayed its working class supporters ran throughout the GMB union's congress in Blackpool this week.

Delegates voted unanimously to review the donations to MPs who do not share the "aims, values and priorities of the union".

According to a GMB spokesperson this could see financial support removed from one third of the 100 MPs sponsored by the GMB, including Peter Mandelson.

The first days of the congress were dominated by the debate about the union's links with New Labour.

Leading figures in the union clearly recognised the depth of the bitterness against Labour. They had to devote a lot of energy to arguing why members should stick with the party.

Retiring general secretary John Edmonds used his farewell speech to administer stern criticisms of the government:

"I still have the persistent feeling that this Labour government feels more comfortable with the employers' agenda," he said.

Nevertheless Edmonds argued that trade unionists should work to reclaim Labour from the likes of the Hinduja brothers and Bernie Ecclestone, and for socialist values.

This message was reinforced by the GMB's newly elected general secretary Kevin Curran.

Curran had to reflect his members' anger at Labour and he proposed a far-reaching review of the union's links to the party.

Ian McCartney, the chair of the Labour Party, told delegates that if they pulled behind the government Labour could stay in office for a generation.

But McCartney's defence of Labour found little echo

among delegates.

In the debate on the conference floor Keith Rowley from London backed a motion calling on the union to switch funds from Labour to union-backed campaigns.

He argued, "I supported Labour for years, until Blair. I swallowed my revulsion and voted for them in 1997. But in 2001 I voted Socialist Alliance."

"This motion came from frustrated Labour members in my union branch. How can we back Blair, a man so hollow it's a wonder he doesn't explode?"

Link

Chris Leary said, "Labour is opposed to our interests, with tuition fees, attacks on asylum seekers and a war on self-respecting socialist or trade unionist could support."

"The Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance have been making gains."

"They support our aims. We should be able to support them."

The GMB leadership managed to win a vote against weakening the union's link with Labour.

Speech after speech from the conference floor denounced the impact of Labour policies—on the minimum wage, long working hours, the decimation of manufacturing industry and privatisation.

And the debates over the link with Labour will continue to grow.

As delegate Danny Faith said at a Socialist Alliance fringe meeting, "Two years ago we moved that the union should stop supporting MPs who didn't support union policy. They wiped the floor with us."

"This time the motion was passed unanimously. This is a step forward."

JUDY COX

Aslef conference

DELEGATES TO the conference of the train drivers' union Aslef unanimously reaffirmed the union's support for the anti-war movement and condemned the war against Iraq.

Conference adopted an executive committee report condemning the "unnecessary, immoral and unlawful" war.

General secretary Mick Rix argued trade unions

should be involved in politics, saying that "we have a right to question what is done in our name. What is now taking place in the world threatens all human beings and all workers."

There was anger at the way the government has abandoned investment in rail in favour of more road building. Delegates also voted for a return to national pay bargaining across the industry and for a "publicly owned and publicly accountable rail network".

Waterloo International delegate Hayley Elston said, "All train drivers should be equal. We need to harmonise pay and conditions—a difficult task but absolutely necessary."

This is one of the issues that Mick Rix is standing for re-election on in the next few weeks, and has the potential for delivering a united campaign across all grades in the industry and with the RMT union.

A motion calling for a campaign to cut drivers' working hours again heard speeches slamming the government.

But delegates were swayed by the argument, put forcefully by the leadership, that it is better to stick with Labour in the hope of winning change from within.

One delegate, however, spoke for many when he told the conference that it "gets harder each year to put this argument".

Some speakers for the leadership's position promised swift, dramatic changes in the Labour Party which would move it back to an Old Labour position.



Friday 27 June

● Musical Crossroads—a concert for peace in Kurdistan, 8pm, Kufa Gallery, 26 Westbourne Grove, London. Admission £10/£5 concessions. Phone 020 7586 5892.

Saturday 28 June

● Stop the SATs—conference for all parents, governors and teachers. 11.30am-3.30pm, South Camden Community School, Charrington St, London.

● Unity demonstrations against the BNP in Burnley, Broxbourne, Halifax and Tipton. For details phone the Anti Nazi League on 020 7924 0333.

Friday 4-Friday 11 July

● Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.

Friday 11 July

● Walter Mosley speaks on the US after 11 September, 6pm, Bookmarks bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London. Phone 020 7637 1848 or e-mail events@bookmarks.uk.com to reserve your free place.

Saturday 14 June

● Stop the war on asylum seekers—demonstration and rally, 1pm, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester.

● Jeremy Hardy versus the Israeli Army—film showing, 2pm and 4pm, Exeter Picture House. Organised by Exeter Stop the War Coalition. Phone 07855 732 435.

Saturday 21 June

● Stop the War Coalition conference, 10am-5pm, Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, London. Tickets £5. Phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6.

Monday 23 June

● George Monbiot speaks on his new book The Age of Consent, 6.30pm, Bookmarks bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London. Phone 020 7637 1848 or e-mail events@bookmarks.uk.com to reserve your free place.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

William Cook strikes



Saturday's rally in Sheffield

Picture: Socialist Worker

Two years fighting a bitter struggle

TRADE UNIONISTS joined a march and rally in Sheffield on Saturday in support of the Cook's workers who have been involved in a two-year dispute.

The foundry workers were sacked in 2001 while the 90-strong workforce was taking official strike action over pay.

Ken Jackson, the right wing former leader of their AEEU union ousted by Derek Simpson, was leader of the union when the workers felt they had no alternative but to pursue their fight through employment tribunals. One of them, Eddy

Grimes, spoke to *Socialist Worker*: "We have been told we'll get a decision from the employment tribunal by the end of July. There were 37 workers involved."

"Today has been the first opportunity to get out on the streets. We wouldn't have even got this rally if Jackson was still in charge."

Around 200 joined the march with union banners representing workers from major manufacturing workplaces.

Derek Barlow, a senior AEEU-Amicus steward at Land Rover in Solihull, told *Socialist Worker*, "The way

these people have been treated is diabolical, having to wait two years for a tribunal."

"I'm glad we finally have a general secretary that is really taking up their case."

Simpson, the AEEU-Amicus leader, and the newly elected TGWU leader, Tony Woodley, were warmly received at the rally.

Both referred to the "awkward squad" label that has been attached to the new breed of general secretaries. "We are no longer the awkward squad. We are the majority squad," said Woodley.

Bus workers

Right route to win better pay

OVER 1,000 bus workers began an angry strike in Sheffield and South Yorkshire last Saturday over a pay deal from the First Group bus and rail company.

The solid strike by members of the TGWU union continued on Monday and Tuesday of this week, and was due to escalate to three days next week.

"The company conned us, that's what's behind this strike," one of the strikers told *Socialist Worker*.

"We voted for our last pay deal because they said they would level up the gap between different drivers' pay. For that we agreed not to strike for two years."

"Now they are saying that closing the pay gap wasn't in writing and that's why we haven't got it."

Bus drivers around Britain are furious over the issue of different pay rates. Many are unlikely to stay long

by HELEN SHOOTER

enough to get to the top rate because the hours, pay and conditions are so gruelling.

In South Yorkshire the company's deal would have meant some drivers getting £5.85 an hour and some £6.92 an hour.

An added insult was that First Group wanted to take two bank holidays from drivers and only backdate the pay claim to May, not April.

That sparked a massive rejection of the deal—some 1,051 votes to 70. The drivers then voted by 85 percent for strike action.

Up to 100 pickets were outside the Olive Grove depot in Sheffield, Britain's largest bus garage, on Saturday.

They pointed out First Group raked in a profit of £216 million last

year and its boss Moir Lockhead has a salary of £510,000.

"This is about keeping the managers rich and the workers poor," said one driver. "They can find the money for them but not for us. We make that profit for them."

"I start work at 4am. I can end up working until 12.30 at night, and we work on weekends. We're not allowed to have a social life."

A seven-day strike by 350 First Group workers in Norwich in January forced the company to retreat in its attack on working hours.

In South Yorkshire the strikers have the same determination to win.

The planned three-day strike next week can only increase the pressure on First Group and is also a chance for the strikers to raise support amongst people in local shopping centres.

Anti-war

AROUND 200 people came to hear George Galloway speak in Ealing in west London on the continuing occupation of Iraq last week.

There was a great mix of people at the meeting, all united in their anger at Blair and his lies, while support for George Galloway was stronger than ever. This meeting proved wrong anyone who had thought the anti-war movement had disappeared. There was a real feeling that action against Bush and Blair must continue.

GEORGE BUCKERFIELD

ALMOST 200 people attended the Greater Manchester Coalition to Stop the

War's first people's assembly last Saturday.

Everyone involved felt this was a positive step forward.

After the assembly two delegates held a banner saying "Another world is possible" near a military band. The police arrived.

After delegates tried to intervene the police arrested James Thorne, a former British army officer, and charged him with a public order offence and assaulting a police officer.

James refutes the charges. Activists will support James. For full details see www.manchesterstopthewar.org RICHARD SEARLE

AROUND 200 people gathered for the Hands off the Middle East event in Brighton last Saturday. It was organised by Sussex Action for Peace.

It proved there is a huge audience for political discussion on a range of issues.

As one participant who had never attended a political event before said, "Listening to an Iraqi speaker made the war in Iraq real to me for the first time and now I want to find out more."

CATH SENKER

OTHER anti-war meetings last week saw 180 people meet in Preston and 120 in Bradford.

Palestine

UP TO 200 people protested outside Downing Street on Thursday of last week against Israel's targeting of international activists in Palestine.

"We want an inquiry into the deaths of the internationalists targeted by Israel," the Palestinian film-maker Leila Sansour told *Socialist Worker*.

"The British government has shown incredible lameness in tackling the situation."

Protesters marched down to Parliament Square where they were joined by members of solidarity activist Tom Hurdall's family. Tom is in a coma after an Israeli soldier shot him in the face in the town of Rafah.

Postal workers

STRONG unofficial action has beaten back a management attack on postal workers at Ilford in outer east London.

Workers walked out on Wednesday of last week in protest at the suspension of three delivery staff.

They had been given too much work to deliver a few days earlier and had been unable to deliver it all. In line with policy, they brought the extra work back.

Management then instructed the workers to sort mail in their own time, without payment, to make up for this "failure". There was also talk of charging the workers with "wilful delay" of the mail—a serious offence that can lead to dismissal.

A mass meeting of over 100 voted to stay out.

On Friday management backed down, reinstated the men and dropped all charges. The backlog of mail will be cleared by paid overtime.

An Ilford CWU union member told *Socialist Worker*, "The workload has been going up and up. You used to be taking out two or three bags and now it's five or six."

"This creates an atmosphere where you're under pressure all the time. I'm glad that we stood up and showed we won't be bullied."

URSULA HAWTHORNE

Health workers

Action forces new offers

HEALTH WORKERS in North Lincolnshire were set to strike again on Friday of this week as part of their battle against poverty pay.

The workers in the North Lincolnshire and Goole NHS trust—which includes three hospitals in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Goole—plan to strike again on Monday, and then on every other day during the week.

This is part of a series of strikes the workers have held against their bosses, private firm Carillion.

The porters, domestics and catering staff are determined to stick out to win £5.02 an hour minimum wage and parity with NHS terms and conditions.

In east London workers at Whipps Cross Hospital in Waltham Forest this week voted to escalate their strikes against ISS Mediclean.

The workers plan to strike for three days beginning next Wednesday.

They have been fighting alongside workers from two other east London trusts, at Homerton University Hospital and at the Mile End and St Clements hospitals for £5.43 an hour or a 10 percent rise (whichever is greater).

At Homerton University Hospital workers voted to accept an offer from ISS Mediclean of £5 an hour minimum wage now, rising to £5.15 next April.

The firm has agreed to work towards harmonising the terms and conditions, except pensions, of contracted and NHS staff by 2006.

In Tower Hamlets, the threat of action by workers at Mile End and St Clements hospitals forced their bosses, Compass Medirest, to offer a £5.17 an hour minimum wage now, rising to £5.34 an hour next April.

Medirest has offered workers a limited sick pay scheme and two days extra leave for those that have worked for the firm for three years or more.

These offers are from companies that previously refused to negotiate—and show that nothing terrifies them more than the prospect of workers taking action.

The 360 ancillary workers at Whipps Cross, however, are rightly convinced they can force ISS Mediclean to cough up more money.

Solidarity from health and other workers is crucial to make sure the strikes in North Lin-

colnshire and at Whipps Cross have the maximum impact.

Send messages of support and donations: Scunthorpe: c/o J Koper, 44 Cliff Garden, Scunthorpe DN15. Cheques payable to Scunthorpe Health Branch Hardship Fund. East London: Unison, Mile End Hospital, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DG. Cheques payable to East London Healthworkers Solidarity Fund.

Amicus

OVER 100 Amicus union members at IT company Fujitsu Services in West Gorton, Manchester, attended a mass meeting last week.

They met to discuss their pay claim, and the company's attacks on their long-standing union recognition and redundancy agreements.

Members voted overwhelmingly to ballot for industrial action, including strikes.

Messages of support can be e-mailed to solidarity@ourunion.org.uk, or faxed to 08707 052 814.

Round-up

A MASS meeting last weekend saw over 120 airport workers at Liverpool's John Lennon Airport argue for possible strike action over huge pay cuts.

Management want to cut baggage handlers' pay by up to 40 percent. The GMB union members are spitting blood.

One worker said, "We work long hours, the shifts wear you out and now this."

PAUL SILLETT

THE THREAT of strikes has forced bosses of the Hanson Brick company to make a new pay offer.

Some 1,500 workers, members of the TGWU, Amicus and GMB unions, at the firm's 14 brick factories around Britain were set to go on a one-day strike on Monday of this week.

Bosses made an improved offer last week. They have now offered a 4 percent pay rise for 15 months, with an "inflation plus 1 percent" offer for the following 12 month period.

Union officials suspended the strike set for Monday of this week while workers ballot on the new offer.

If the workers reject the offer then they are due to hold a one-day strike on Monday of next week.

THE DISPUTE in Manchester between union electricians and their employers continued last week.

Twelve electricians walked out of the One Piccadilly Gardens construction site on Thursday 29 May after a plethora of serious irregularities by their employers.

Crown House & DAF were taking money from the workers' pay as a mandatory subscription fee for the Amicus union. This sweetheart deal has been used to try to avoid confrontation.

Builders at the site have been donating to the strikers' cause.

STEFAN MIKULIN Send messages of support—phone 07813 456 831.

Nursery nurses

FOLLOWING ON from two weeks of national strike action, nursery nurses in Scotland are now taking a rolling programme of selective strike action to win a regrading claim of up to £4,000 per year.

Nursery nurses in Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Shetland and Orkney took two days of strike action last week.

Unison, the workers' union, plans to continue calling different regions out week by week

SOME 950 lift engineers in the Amicus union were set to strike on Friday of this week in their fight against their employer, Otis, imposing a pay settlement of 1.7 percent.

Workers will strike until Tuesday of next week and again from 27 June.

THE GMB and Amicus unions are set to ballot 2,500 workers at the BNFL nuclear plant at Sellafield in Cumbria to strike over pay.

Bosses promised that industrial staff and white-collar workers pay would be equalised by 2004. Union steward John Teere told a mass meeting last week, "It is show time. They will destroy you if you do not support this call for action."

until they reach a settlement.

Around 5,000 workers have been involved in what has been for many their first taste of strike action.

Strikes were set to hit the Highland region on Wednesday and Thursday of this week, which will close up to 50 nursery schools. Workers will take to the streets on Thursday to lobby the regional council headquarters.

IAN HOOD

Socialist Worker

Stitch-up at Labour's National Executive Committee

Outrage at attempt to silence Galloway

THE LABOUR Party's top committee has sparked outrage by refusing to lift the suspension of anti-war MP George Galloway and even closing down discussion on the issue.

The undemocratic cenes at Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) on Tuesday of his week underline widespread suspicions that about's hierarchy will use very dirty trick against the ost prominent anti-war igure in Britain.

Galloway has been suspended for likening the US nd British attack on Iraq to

by **KEVIN OVENDEN**

wolves falling on prey and for calling on the head of the British army in Iraq not to obey illegal orders.

The Nuremberg trials established that "following orders" was not a defence when those orders amounted to war crimes.

Galloway told Socialist Worker, "I am bitterly disappointed at the continuing suspension of my party membership.

"This gagging order, which disables my parliamentary work and prejudices my rights, is without justification and virtually without

support in the party.

"A large number of NEC members were mandated to support my reinstatement. This is becoming a big issue in the labour movement.

"Trade unions including the TGWU, GMB, CWU, RMT, Aslef, many sections of Unison and others are all coming behind the campaign launched by Michael Foot and Glenda Jackson MP and I hope that it will succeed.

"But I will not remain indefinitely in this limbo. We are demanding this matter is resolved one way or the other swiftly.

"My constituents cannot be expected to put up with this situation indefinitely and I will not ask them to.

"An MP cannot be indefinitely silenced over honestly held views openly expressed. That is the kind of parliament they had in Baghdad."

Efforts

Labour's deputy general secretary, Chris Lennie, is heading the "investigation" into Galloway and has promised to meet him on Monday of next week.

But there is no guarantee the suspension will be lifted quickly or not lead to expulsion from the party.

Threats of disciplinary action have also been made against left Labour MP John McDonnell after comments he made over Bobby Sands, the Republican hunger striker who was elected to parliament before he died on hunger strike.

That all points to greater efforts by New Labour to isolate the few principled left wing MPs.

Galloway has made it clear that he is not prepared to disown the comments he made "before, during or after the war".

In addition to messages



Galloway spoke to a lively lobby of Tuesday's National Executive Committee meeting in London

of support and hundreds of donations to fund his libel fight against the Christian Science Monitor and Daily Telegraph, he has received enthusiastic support at a score of public meetings over the last few weeks. Over 3,500 people have attended them.

At each, there have been popular calls to translate the historic movement against the war on Iraq into a political challenge to New Labour.

■ **Donations to Galloway's legal defence fund should be made payable to "George Galloway Legal Fund" and sent to Davenport Lyons Solicitors, 1 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 2NL.**

Freedom of speech

THE LABOUR Party's decision to suspend George Galloway for what he said in two television interviews against the war on Iraq is both wrong and potentially damaging to the party.

It should be lifted by the National Executive Committee.

Galloway's remarks about "wolves" and the issue of "illegal orders" may not be to

everyone's taste but free speech is even more important during an unpopular war opposed, when it began, by the majority of the British people.

Wasn't the export of such democratic freedom one of the coalition's "war aims"?

Many in the party think the intention is to keep Galloway in this limbo long enough to ensure he can't contest

the forthcoming selections in the new Glasgow constituencies.

The party can dispel such unworthy suspicions by concluding this matter without further delay.

Statement from Michael Foot, Mark Seddon, Glenda Jackson MP, Bill Speirs general secretary STUC, Alice Mahon MP, Alan Simpson MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP

What happened at meeting

THE CHAIR of the National Executive Committee, Diana Holland, opened the meeting by saying its officers (who are not party functionaries) had decided Galloway's suspension should be discussed.

Steve Pickering, a representative of the GMB union, spoke up strongly against the suspension, which was driven through over five weeks ago by Labour's unelected general secretary, David Triesman.

Christine Shawcroft, a left wing representative of the Constituency Labour Parties, also argued against the suspension. Fellow left winger Mark Seddon was called next.

But before he could speak, Sir Jeremy Beecham, who represents Labour councillors, said, "Move next business."

This bureaucratic trick is designed to kill off discussion and was voted on without any debate.

Only Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft, Ann Black (the third left wing constituency rep) and Steve

Pickering voted to continue the discussion.

Those voting against having a debate included Mike Griffiths of the GPMU and Maggie Jones and Nancy Coull of Unison, despite their unions' strong anti-war positions and widespread support for Galloway's reinstatement.

Constituency rep Shahid Malik also voted with the New Labour leadership. As if to add to the picture of a mockery of justice, deputy prime minister John Prescott and placeman Ian McCartney MP barked out, "Back the general secretary" as the vote was taken.

Tony Blair was not there. But surprisingly also absent were Mick Cash of the RMT, Jimmy Elsbey of the TGWU and John Keggie of the CWU.

The RMT executive, incoming TGWU general secretary Tony Woodley and the CWU conference have all called for Galloway's reinstatement.

The NEC will not meet again until September.

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